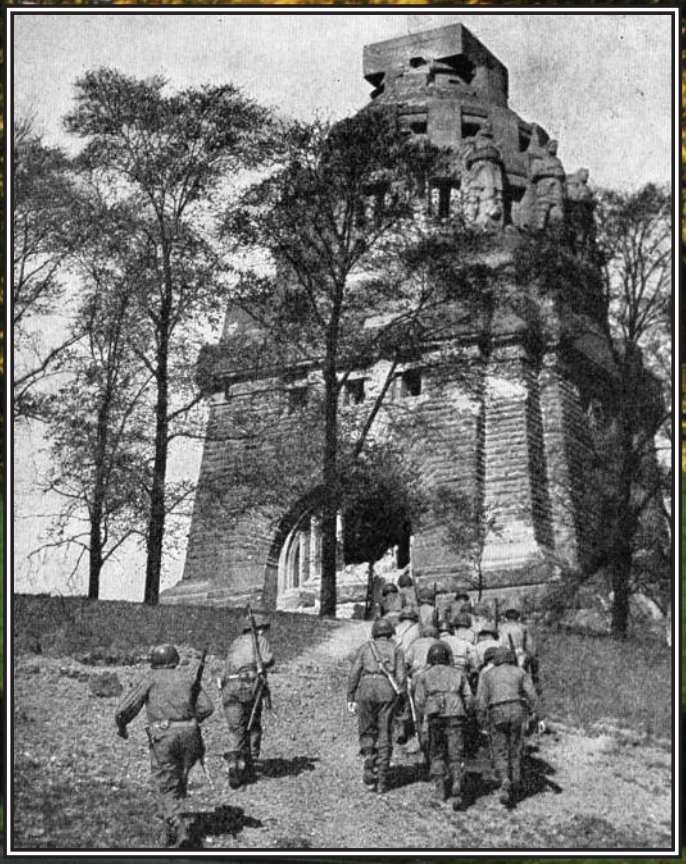
AFTER THE BATTLE



THE BATTLE FOR LEIPZIG

9 770306 154080 30
£3.95

Number 130

NUMBER 130

© Copyright *After the Battle* 2005

Editor-in-Chief: Winston G. Ramsey
Editor: Karel Margry
Published by
Battle of Britain International Ltd.,
The Mews, Hobbs Cross House,
Hobbs Cross, Old Harlow,
Essex CM17 0NN, England
Telephone: 01279 41 8833
Fax: 01279 41 9386
E-mail: hq@afterthebattle.com
Website: www.afterthebattle.com
Printed in Great Britain by
Trafford Print Colour Ltd.,
Shaw Wood Way, Doncaster DN2 5TB.

After the Battle is published on the 15th of February, May, August and November.

LONDON STOCKIST for the *After the Battle* range:
Motorbooks, 33 St Martin's Court, St Martin's Lane, London WC2N 4AN
Telephone: 020 7836 5376. Fax: 020 7497 2539

United Kingdom Newsagent Distribution:
Lakeside Publishing Services Ltd, Unit 2,
Rich Industrial Estate, Devon Street, London SE15 1JR
United States Distribution and Subscriptions:
RZM Imports Inc, 151 Harvard Avenue,
Stamford, CT 06902
Telephone: 1-203-264-0774
Toll Free: 1-800-562-7308
Website: www.rzm.com
Canadian Distribution and Subscriptions:
Vanwell Publishing Ltd., PO Box 2131,
1 Northrup Crescent,
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 7S2.
Telephone: (905) 937 3100 Fax: (905) 937 1760
Toll Free: 1-800-661-6136
E-mail: sales@vanwell.com
Australian Subscriptions and Back Issues:
Technical Book and Magazine Company, Pty, Ltd.,
323-331 LaTrobe Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone: + 61 3 9600 0922 Fax: + 61 3 9640 0055
E-mail: info@techbooks.com.au
New Zealand Distribution:
Dal McGuirk's "MILITARY ARCHIVE", P.O. Box 24486,
Royal Oak, Auckland 1030 New Zealand.
Telephone: 021 627 870 Fax: 9-6252817
E-mail: milrchiv@mist.co.nz
Italian Distribution:
Tuttostoria, PO Box 395, 1-43100 Parma.
Telephone: ++390521 29 27 33, Fax: ++390521 29 03 87
E-mail: tuttostoria@libero.it
Dutch Language Edition:
SI Publicaties/Quo Vadis, Postbus 282, 6800 AG Arnhem.
Telephone: 026-4462834
E-mail: si@sipublicaties.nl

CONTENTS

THE BATTLE FOR LEIPZIG 2

REMEMBRANCE
Spindle Commemorated 40

FROM THE EDITOR 42

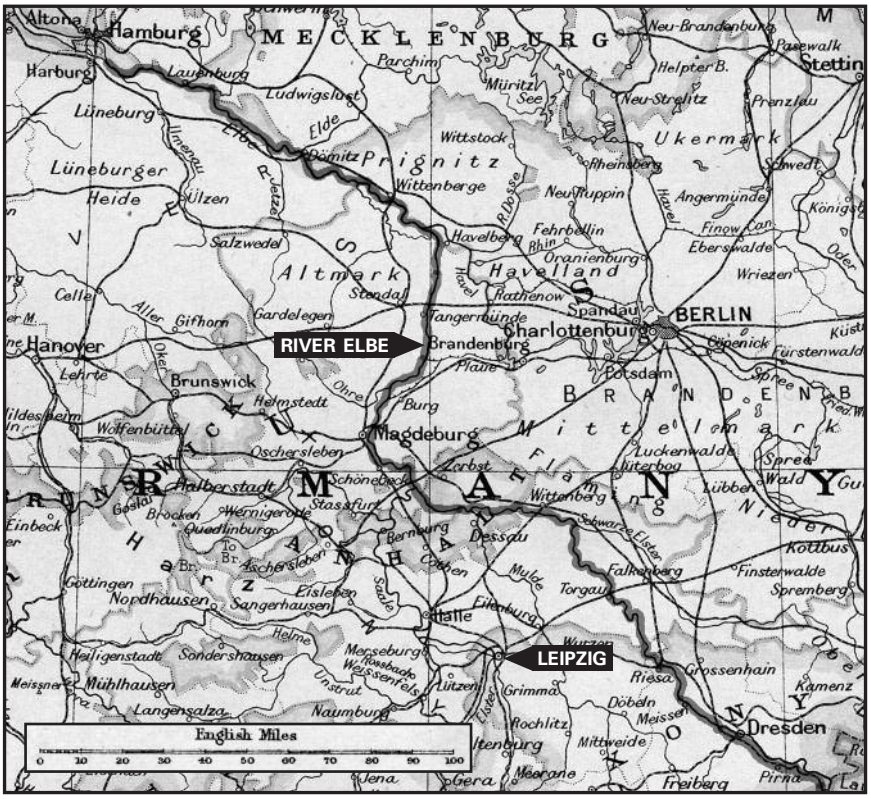
Front Cover: Epitomising the battle for Leipzig 1945: the Battle of the Nations Monument. (Karel Margry)

Centre Pages: *Above left:* A crowd of curious civilians keeps a respectful distance from a Sherman of the 741st Tank Battalion knocked out by a Panzerfaust on the corner of Zschochersche Strasse and Karl-Heine-Strasse in western Leipzig. (USNA) *Below left:* The same corner 60 years later. (Karel Margry) *Above right:* A Jeep and a Sherman of the 777th Tank Battalion knocked out at the crossroads of Preussenstrasse and Ludolf-Colditz-Strasse near the Battle of the Nations Monument. (Lee Miller Archives) *Below right:* Looking towards the city centre on what is today Prager Strasse. (Karel Margry)

Back Cover: Sunday, May 22, 2005 saw the unveiling of a memorial at the former airfield at Hunsdon in Hertfordshire. This was the base from where Operation 'Jericho' was launched in February 1944 by No. 140 Wing to breach the walls of Amiens prison (see issue 28) and which led to the death of its leader, Wing Commander Charles Pickard.

Acknowledgements: For their help with the Leipzig story the Editor would like to thank Joe Lipsius, Joseph K. Richardson and Amy Joyce Rose, who together run the 69th Division website *www.69th-infantry-division.com*; George W. Shultz; Jr; Jim Parker; Linda Plonski; Arabella Hayes of the Lee Miller Archives; Roger Bell; Michael Foedrowitz; Birgit Horn of the Stadtarchiv Leipzig; Katharina Menzel; and Uwe Niemann of Uni-Versal press agency, Leipzig.

Photo Credits: IWM — Imperial War Museum, London; NIOD — Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, Amsterdam; USNA — US National Archives.



Although it had been established as far back as September 1944 that Leipzig would fall within the future Soviet Zone of Occupation, this did not have any effect on the American effort to capture the city. General Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, never let his strategy against Germany be influenced by the proposed Zones of Occupation. In fact, the idea was always to advance as far east as Berlin and it was only in early April 1945 that Eisenhower decided to halt his armies at the Elbe.

Leipzig was known throughout Germany as the location of the Völkerschlachtdenkmal (Battle of the Nations Monument) commemorating the victory over Napoleon in the Battle of Leipzig of October 1813. Located on the south-eastern outskirts of the city, the massive granite tower could be seen for many miles away.

Leipzig, 85 miles south-west of Berlin, was one of the last big German cities to be captured by the American army in World War II. The battle for Leipzig lasted for two days — April 18-20, 1945 — and involved two American infantry divisions which captured the city after a concentric attack from three directions. Signal Corps photographer Tech/4 W. D. MacDonald pictured Leipzig, much of it ravaged by two years of Allied bombing raids, from an L-4 Piper Cub light plane on April 19, 1945 — the day most of the city fell in Allied hands. Two of the buildings that formed strong points in the German defence of the inner city are visible in this shot taken looking north-east: the Neues Rathaus (New City Hall) in the foreground and the Hauptbahnhof (main railway station) in mid-distance just right of centre. (USNA)

THE BATTLE FOR LEIPZIG

By Karel Margry

By mid-April 1945, Leipzig, the capital of Saxony in eastern Germany, was one of the last big cities which had not yet fallen to the Allied armies invading Hitler's Germany from East and West.

With a population of 750,000, Leipzig in 1945 was Germany's fifth largest city. Founded in 1160 at the confluence of the Weisse Elster and Pleisse rivers, the city had grown to become a centre of traffic, trade and culture. It was here that Martin Luther preached his first sermon in the impressive St Thomas Church, where Bach had played the organ, Goethe had studied and Richard Wagner was born. It was the site of one of Europe's oldest universities and the seat of Germany's Supreme Court, the Reichsgericht. The inner city included many historic buildings, churches and museums, and fine examples of Renaissance and Baroque architecture.

Leipzig's name was also connected to a landmark event in the history of the German nation itself. In October 1813, in the Battle of Leipzig, the united armies of Prussia, Russia, Austria and Sweden had defeated the army of Napoleon, forcing the French emperor to retreat from German soil and causing the Grand Empire to collapse. Half a million soldiers fought in the battle and over 110,000 had died in what had been the largest conflict in European history to date. German patriots saw the battle not just as the end of Napoleon but also as a crucial event on the road to the formation of a unified German state under Bismarck in 1870.

To commemorate this milestone battle, the Germans later erected the so-called Völkerschlachtdenkmal (Battle of the Nations Monument) on the former battlefield in the south-eastern outskirts of the city. Sponsored by the Deutsche Patriotenbund (League of German Patriots), architect Bruno Schmitz designed a stone tower, 91 metres high, flanked on four sides with enormous statues representing Teutonic knights guarding the liberty of Germany, and topped with a large viewing platform. Inside the tower's broad base was a huge crypt with more giant figures honouring the soldiers who had died. Construction of the huge edifice was started in 1898. Built from reinforced concrete with an outer cladding of large granite blocks, it took 15 years to complete. The resulting monument was a massive affair which could be seen for miles around. Dedicated in October 1913, the centenary of Napoleon's defeat, the monument quickly became one of Germany's prime national memorials, its fantastic symbolism making it a rallying point for patriotic ceremonies and mass events. In 1945, the monument would prove an ideal citadel in another, more modern war.

Traditionally a working-class city, and birthplace of the German labour movement, Leipzig did not overly support the National Socialists. At the last free elections in March 1933, the Nazi party failed to gain a majority in the city. Its Mayor since 1930, Oberbürgermeister Carl Goerdeler, belonged to the German National Party and objected to the Nazis' rearmament and anti-Semitism. Not until 1937, after he had stepped down out of protest against the Nazis removing a bust of the Jewish composer Felix Mendelssohn from in front of the city hall, were the Nazis able to appoint reliable Party members as Mayor — first Walter Dönicke, replaced in August 1938 by Alfred Freyberg. (Goerdeler would become a key figure in the anti-Hitler movement, and be executed after the July 1944 plot to kill Hitler.)

Leipzig was also one of Germany's most important industrial and commercial cities. Traditionally a centre of printing, bookbinding and the textile industry, it was famous all over Europe for its trade and industries fair. The Nazis labelled it their 'Reichsmessestadt' (Reich Fair City) and modern Leipzig included many factories and plants that were vital to the war economy of the Third Reich. Prime among them was the huge Hugo Schneider AG (HASAG) arms and ammunitions plant at Paunsdorf on the eastern outskirts of the city, but no less important were three aircraft-producing factories in the northern suburbs — the Junkers works at Mockau (next to the city aerodrome), the Erla works at Abtnaundorf and the Mitteldeutsche Motorenwerke engine factory in Portitz. Other important war plants were the Büssing NAG motor works at Möckern and the Allgemeine Transportgesellschaft (ATG) arms factory at Kleinzschocher.

The Battle of the Nations Monument was the venue for many nationalistic ceremonies and mass events, and the Nazis also used it as a setting for many of their gatherings. Here a giant oak-leaf wreath adorns the steps of the monument at the ceremony mourning the death of Reich President Paul von Hindenburg in August 1934.

By 1943, Leipzig had a total of 221 armaments-related factories employing 154,119 workers. No less than 43,950 of them were foreign workers (either on a regular labour contract or rounded up for forced labour), prisoners of war, and concentration camp inmates, who were housed in some 400 buildings and hutted camps in and around the city. The concentration camp inmates, which included both men and women, were in satellite camps of Buchenwald, Flossenbürg and Ravensbrück.

Although Leipzig had its first air raid warning on the night of August 16/17, 1940 (in all there would be 590 during the war) and was high on the list of Allied targets, for the first three years of the war the Allied bomber fleets did not strike at this distant city in force, and it suffered only minor damage from individual intruding aircraft or strays from attacks on Berlin. The first fire damage and injuries only occurred on March 27/28, 1943; the first fatal casualties on the night of August 31/September 1 of that year, when four people were killed. The population lived in fear but for many the most noticeable effect of the air war was the influx of evacuees from bomb-devastated cities elsewhere in Germany, mainly Berlin.

Anticipating the aerial onslaught that was sure to come, the city authorities had made extensive preparations to protect the population and minimise the damage, but with little success. City officials were sent to bombed cities in the west to study what was needed. Reception centres to cater for 20,000 bomb victims were planned. The university's priceless book collection was protectively stored in the sturdy vaults of the Battle of the Nations Monument. However, by 1943, only ten air raid bunkers (out of 18 planned) had been completed, with a combined capacity of 7,500 persons. This offered protection to just one per cent of the population — together with Dresden the worst percentage of any of the big German cities. To make up for it, the cellars of 26,000 homes had been prepared as makeshift shelters. Although it was not an official shelter, many would also seek protection inside the Battle of Nations Monument. (In May 1944 miners began work on four air raid shelter tunnels underneath the monument, capable of protecting several thousands.)

All quiet on the steps today — almost symbolic of new times. Today's directorate tries to foster a less political and more objective view of the monument. (Niemann)

Hitler at the Nazi rallies for Saxony on July 16, 1933.

Above: **Leipzig was also the seat of the Reichsgericht (Reich Supreme Court) established by the Kaiser and maintained by the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. The neo-Renaissance courthouse was built in 1888-95, the square being named the Reichsgerichtsplatz. On May 17, 1936, the building served as an impressive backdrop to another Nazi mass meeting, the 'Day of German Lawyers'. The banner says 'Through National Socialism German justice to the German people'. (NIOD)**

Below: **After the war, in GDR times, the square was renamed Dimitroff-Platz (after the communist Georgi Dimitroff, who was tried by the Nazis at the Reichsgericht during the Reichstag Fire trial of 1933) and the former Reichsgericht building became the Museum of Visual Arts. Today, after the reunification of East and West Germany, the square is Simsonplatz and the building accommodates the Bundesverwaltungsgericht (Federal Administrative Court).**

The first major raid came on October 20/21, 1943, when 271 RAF Lancasters, out of 358 despatched, attacked the city. Bombing was very scattered and mostly hit the suburbs of Stötteritz and Paunsdorf, killing 40 and wounding 200.

The heaviest raid of the war was on December 3/4. A total of 307 Lancasters and 220 Halifaxes dropped tons of high-explosive and incendiaries on Leipzig, creating over 5,000 fires and even some local firestorms which left the inner city in ruins. About 13,500 buildings, many of them old and historic, were destroyed or damaged. At least 1,800 people were killed, 4,000 wounded, and an estimated 131,000 — one-fifth of the population — lost their homes. The number of fatal casualties was relatively low because many people, in order to combat the fires, had left the air raid shelters before the All Clear signal and thus inadvertently escaped suffocation in the shelters.

The third and last heavy RAF raid on the city, by 823 bombers on the night of February 19/20, 1944, did slight material damage but killed 972 people (and cost Bomber Command 78 aircraft). The following day brought the first daylight raid on Leipzig by American bombers of the US Eighth Air Force, the start of a sustained series of attacks on the city's factories and railway yards. One of these, on July 4, 1944 by over 400 bombers, seriously damaged the platform hall of the Hauptbahnhof, the main railway station. The Americans returned in force on February 27, 1945, when over 700 B-17s attacked, and again on April 4, with 320 aircraft.

In all, between August 1942 and April 1945, Leipzig received 24 air raids which together killed over 5,000 people, over 3,600 of them foreign and slave workers, and reduced large parts of the once-proud city to rubble. The Allied armies closing in on Leipzig would find much of it shattered by the war.

Hitler's rostrum today: the platform in front of the monument. (Niemann)

As the divisions of the US V Corps advanced on Leipzig in the first half of April 1945 they unexpectedly bumped into 'Flak Alley', the thick belt of fixed heavy anti-aircraft guns protecting the industrial towns around Merseburg. The guns, nearly 1,000 of them, were as deadly against ground troops as against aircraft and formed a formidable protective shield around Leipzig, which lay 20 miles further east. The 2nd Infantry Division, having taken over the direct eastward advance on Leipzig from the 9th Armored Division, took nearly a week to fight its way through the concentrated band of flak batteries. Here, a soldier inspects one of the captured 12.8cm guns. (USNA)

US V CORPS ON THE ROAD TO LEIPZIG

On April 4, 1945, having completed encirclement of the Ruhr industrial area, the American 12th Army Group of Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley began a new offensive to the east. With three armies lined up — from north to south the US Ninth, First and Third Armies — Bradley was to cut a wide swathe across the centre of Germany in the general direction of Leipzig and Dresden in a new Allied main effort at splitting Germany in two by linking up with the Soviet Red Army.

The main role in the new drive was assigned to the First Army of Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges in the centre, a direct thrust on Leipzig, to be followed by a crossing of the Elbe river east of the city. The Ninth Army was to advance to Magdeburg on the Elbe and be prepared to continue the advance to Berlin or to the north-east; the Third Army was to aim for Chemnitz and ready itself for a turn to the south-east later.

After regrouping east of the Ruhr Pocket, First Army consisted of two corps comprising two armoured and four infantry divisions. On the left was the US VII Corps of Major General J. Lawton Collins with the 3rd Armored and 1st and 104th Infantry Divisions; on the right was the US V Corps of Major General C. Ralph Huebner with the 9th Armored and 2nd and 69th Infantry Divisions.

While VII Corps was to advance across the Harz Mountains, wooded and difficult terrain, V Corps could utilise the wide Thüringen plain south of the Harz, a ready-made avenue to the Elbe. Except for some wooded hills at Hann-Münden in the south-west corner of the corps sector, there were no real hills or mountains barring the way and, except for Leipzig and Halle, the advance would meet no major cities. The only geographical barriers were a series of intermediate larger and smaller rivers, notably the Weser, Leine, Saale, Weisse Elster and Mulde.

Enemy opposition also promised to be light. With almost all of Heeresgruppe B encircled in the Ruhr Pocket and with the north wing of Heeresgruppe G having been pushed back to the south-east, the American armies faced a vast gap in the enemy defences. The only formation left to form a plug was the hastily reformed 11. Armee under General der Infanterie Otto Hitzfeld. The newly constituted 12. Armee of General der Panzertruppen Walter Wenck was still assembling in the Harz Mountains, leaving the 11. Armee to defend the Thüringen plain. The best formation opposing First Army was the LXVII. Armeekorps, fielding a conglomerate of training and replacement troops.

First Army's offensive started on April 5 and developed much as expected. In the V Corps' sector the drive was led by the two infantry divisions, the 2nd Division (Major General Walter M. Robertson) advancing on the left and the 69th (Major General Emil F. Reinhardt) on the right. The 69th Division almost immediately ran into strong opposition from LXVII. Armeekorps units at Hann-Münden, where the Werra and Fulda rivers join to form the Weser, and it was not until late on the 7th that the town was cleared and crossings gained over the Werra. The 2nd Division, after a stiff fight with the garrison of Hofgeismar, reached the Weser on April 6 and, making an unopposed river crossing in assault boats at dusk, gained a bridgehead on the other side. Advancing another 13 miles in two days, the two divisions crossed the Leine on April 8, the 2nd Division even seizing a bridge intact at the university town of Göttingen, which the Germans had declared an open city because of the thousands of hospitalised soldiers there.

That day, April 8, German opposition facing V Corps began to thin out even more. The 11. Armee — now under a new commander, General der Artillerie Walter Lucht — received orders to withdraw into the Harz and hold it until Wenck's 12. Armee could arrive to launch a counter-offensive to relieve Heeresgruppe B in the Ruhr Pocket. Although he knew Hitler's new plan could never succeed, Lucht complied with the order. Consequently, all contingents of the 11. Armee, except LXVII. Armeekorps (now under Hitzfeld), began making their way to the mountains.

The following day, April 9, V Corps advanced eastwards yet another ten miles. The 2nd Division captured Duderstadt, liberating 600 Allied prisoners of war; the 69th Division occupied Heiligenstadt, a few miles to the south-east. General Huebner now ordered the 9th Armored Division (Major General John W. Leonard) to take over the lead. On April 10 and 11 the armour made good progress, advancing a spectacular 50 miles, but on the third day they got a rude shock. Just over five miles from the Saale river, near the town of Schotterey, Task Force Karsteter of Combat Command B (CCB), the division's northern-most column, suddenly came under fire from a nest of fixed anti-aircraft guns. The heavy flak guns were as deadly against armour as against aircraft and they knocked out seven Sherman tanks, four trucks and one half-track before the task force could deploy and disable the guns.

The 9th Armored had bumped into one of the most concentrated belts of AA guns in all of Germany. Forming a great semi-circular arc — from Bitterfeld in the north-east past Halle, Merseburg and Weissenfels to Zeitz in the south-east, with Leipzig standing in the centre of the arc — the ring of big guns had been created not so much to defend Leipzig but to protect a series of synthetic oil refineries and associated industrial plants at Merseburg, Leuna and elsewhere. Set up in March 1944 and organised into the 14. Flak-Division commanded by Generalmajor Adolf Gerlach with headquarters in Leipzig, the flak belt had grown from 374 guns ranging from 7.5cm to 12.8cm to possibly a thousand pieces in April 1945. Grouped in batteries varying from 12 to 36 guns, the weapons were particularly effective against ground targets in the Leipzig area due to the relatively flat terrain which gave the gunners excellent observation and fields of fire.

Although the flak belt was well known to Allied aircrews, nobody had thought of reporting its existence to the Allied ground forces. The Allied air forces possessed accurate maps and aerial photographs on the exact location of the batteries but it took three days for these to reach the 9th Armored.

Because the AA guns seemed to represent the outer defences of Leipzig, General Huebner instructed Leonard's 9th Armored to change course and bypass Leipzig to the south to gain the Mulde river, 13 miles beyond the city. Robertson's 2nd Division was to take over the drive on Leipzig from the west, while Reinhardt's 69th Division was to follow the armour and then come in on the city from the south and east.

Having met furious resistance at Weissenfels on the Saale, the 9th Armored on April 13 pulled out of that town, crossed the Saale on a bridge captured intact by Combat Command R (CCR) at Naumburg, south-west of Weissenfels, and advanced to cross the Weisse Elster river near Zeitz. Two days later, CCR on the right flank broke free of the flak belt and dashed all the way to the Mulde, reaching it at Colditz, 20 miles south-east of Leipzig (see *After the Battle* No. 66).

The 69th Division's 271st Infantry Regiment took two days, April 13 and 14, to clear the determined 1,500-strong German garrison of Weissenfels, in the process crossing the Saale in assault boats. With that obstacle removed, all regiments of the 69th followed in the wake of the 9th Armored tanks, sweeping south around Leipzig.

The 2nd Division, taking the direct route

to Leipzig, on the 15th took Merseburg and neighbouring industrial towns. Its 23rd Infantry Regiment crossed the Saale over a damaged railway bridge after dark, the first of a series of night moves planned to avoid the fire of the big flak guns. Under cover of darkness, the men could get close enough to the gun pits to bring down accurate artillery fire on them, which usually sufficed to get the flak crews to flee or surrender.

Hoping to keep casualties to a minimum in this last phase of the war, both the 2nd and 69th Divisions made measured advances toward Leipzig. On April 17, their artillery started registering on targets in and around the city. By the morning of April 18, the two divisions stood poised to attack into Leipzig.

THE SITUATION INSIDE LEIPZIG

As the Allied armies got closer to Leipzig, the city's military and civilian authorities had to face the question of whether to defend the city or not. Few regular troops were at hand for the task, and to make matters worse each operated under a different headquarters. Available in the city in early April were the Ersatz-Bataillon (Replacement Battalion) of Infanterie-Regiment 107 with 750 men, 500 of them half-trained recruits; a Kraftfahr-Ersatz-Abteilung (Transport Corps Replacement Battalion) of 250 men — both under the Wehrmacht commander of Leipzig, Generalmajor Hans von Ziegesar; eight battalions of Volkssturm (home guard), under command of the ex-Mayor and former NSDAP-Kreisleiter (Nazi Party district leader), Walther Dönicke; and the city's 3,400-man police force under Generalmajor der Polizei Wilhelm von Grolman. For armament, the troops had only their small arms, a few machine guns and an abundance of Panzerfaust hand-held anti-tank weapons, but no heavy weapons or armour.

On April 5, Paul Budin, the influential director of the HASAG ammunitions plant, invited party and military commanders for a meeting at his office in Leipzig-Lindenau. Present were Martin Mutschmann, the NSDAP-Gauleiter (Nazi party regional leader) of Saxony; General der Infanterie Hans Wolfgang Reinhardt, commander of Wehrkreis IV, the home army region of which Leipzig formed part; and the local commanders in Leipzig, Wehrmachtkommandant von Ziegesar, Kreisleiter Dönicke of the Volkssturm and General von Grolman of the police. Budin wanted to know what measures had been taken to defend Leipzig. When von Ziegesar replied that this was a purely military matter not to be discussed with civilians, Budin sharply retorted that in accordance with the Führer Directive on the defence of the Reich Leipzig was to be defended to the last man. He stated that Ziegesar was a sickly man without any real combat experience and should be replaced by someone more courageous and suitable for the job.

Much to the generals' surprise, a few days later (April 10), von Ziegesar was relieved as Kampfkommandant (Combat Commander) of Leipzig, and replaced by a new man, Oberst Hans von Poncet. The new commander was an unknown quantity to the authorities and commanders in Leipzig and himself not familiar with the conditions in the city.

Before Poncet arrived to take up his post, General von Grolman called another conference at his police headquarters. Here former Kreisleiter Dönicke, in his capacity as commander of the Volkssturm troops, explained his plans for the defence of the city. As the main threat was coming from the west, the city would be shielded only on that side. There would be three lines of defence. The first, drawn two miles west of the city, would be an outpost line, manned by Hitlerjugend armed with Panzerfäuste. The second line, manned by regular troops, would be along the city limits. The third and main line of defence would follow the Weisse Elster river, which separates the western, smaller part of the city from the eastern main part. As soon as the troops had made a fighting withdrawal behind the river line all bridges over it would be blown.

To General von Grolman that plan was insane, bringing nothing but pointless bloodshed and destruction of the city. He objected to the use of Hitlerjugend which he called 'blatant child murder'. Also, the enemy was sure to envelop the city and attack from several sides. Blowing up the Elster bridges would be particularly disastrous for they carried the water, gas and electricity lines to the western quarters of the city and demolishing them would leave one-third of the population without any supply of them. He, for one, would not allow his police troops to be committed to battle.

As the German commanders prepared Leipzig for ground war, the final acts of the air war hit the city. On April 10, 230 aircraft of RAF Bomber Command struck during daylight targeting their loads on the Hauptbahnhof and Engelsdorf railway yards. The following night, April 10/11, Leipzig suffered its last raid of the war when 95 RAF bombers attacked the railway yards at Wahren.

On the evening of April 14, the newly arrived combat commander, Oberst von Poncet, called a meeting to introduce himself to the local civilian and military commanders, among them Oberbürgermeister Freyberg, Volkssturm commander Dönicke and General Grolman. At this first meeting, Poncet left no doubt that he intended to defend the city to the last bullet. He expected all troops — regular units, Hitlerjugend, Volkssturm and police — to do their share and made it clear that he would court-martial anyone who obstructed his measures. During the subsequent discussion it became clear that a wide rift existed between those who wanted to save the city — Freyberg and Grolman — and those who wanted to fight for it — Poncet and Dönicke. Grolman in particular implored Poncet not to fight, but to no avail. He then told Poncet that the police troops were under his command and that he had no intention of releasing them for battle. When Poncet insisted on fighting, Grolman requested that at least he avoid destroying the Weisse Elster bridges that were so vital to the western quarters of the city. This Poncet promised to do, but the meeting broke up in a definite mood of distrust between the parties concerned.

In the few days left to him, Oberst von Poncet prepared Leipzig for the coming battle. He ordered the Volkssturm to construct roadblocks from tramcars filled with stones. On April 16, the city air raid sirens were sounded as a warning signal to the population of 'enemy approaching'. (American troops a few miles outside the city heard the sinister wailing too and found it hair-raising.)

By now, Poncet had made a battle plan. Acknowledging the obvious impossibility of giving the city an all-round defence, he had decided to leave defence of the river line and the outer districts to a thin crust of Volkssturm troops and to entrench his main forces in two redoubts that would be defended to the very end. One of these would be the Neues Rathaus (New City Hall), the other the Battle of the Nations Monument on the south-eastern outskirts.

On April 17, on his orders, Kreisleiter Dönicke barricaded the city hall area with 500 of his Volkssturm troops. Poncet himself occupied the Battle of the Nations Monument with about 300 of his best men. The massive structure, with its walls 20 feet thick, was an ideal fortress but Poncet was no doubt also attracted by its symbolic significance: a sturdy representation of the German national spirit, it seemed an ideal venue for a Wagnerian last stand. A large supply of food, water, and ammunition was on hand in the monument's crypt, sufficient to last the garrison for two months.

That same day, April 17, Oberbürgermeister Freyberg asked Police General von Grolman to take over civilian authority from him, imploring him to do everything in his power to protect the population. But for the moment Kampfkommandant von Poncet and Volkssturm commander Dönicke held all the cards. During the night SS troopers cruised the outskirts of Leipzig, forcing the townspeople to take down white flags and to organise resistance.

While the 2nd Division was battling through the flak belt, the 69th Division was driving south around Leipzig in the wake of the armour in order to gain positions from which it could penetrate the city through the back door. Army photographer Tech/5 Fred Poinsett pictured infantrymen of the 69th on the outskirts of Leipzig. (USNA)

On the morning of April 18, maintaining its eastward drive after a series of night advances from Merseburg, the 2nd Division broke into Leipzig from the west. Pfc George Shultz, regimental photographer of the 23rd Infantry, pictured the first troops and vehicles entering the western city district of Lindenau (see the map on pages 18-19). The Dodge weapons carrier is coming down Merseburger Strasse, just before its junction with what was then the Albert-Schlageter-Strasse, named after one of the Nazi movement's favourite martyrs (see *The Third Reich Then and Now*). Note the civilians curiously watching the Americans' entry into their city. (Shultz)

THE 2nd DIVISION ENTERS LEIPZIG FROM THE WEST

Having taken over the direct advance on Leipzig from the 9th Armored Division on April 13, the 2nd Division had taken three days to struggle through the belt of anti-aircraft defences and capture the industrial cities of Leuna and Merseburg. On April 16, it broke free of these and resumed its eastward drive along the flat plain to Leipzig, now only 20 miles away.

The division's task in the Leipzig operation was to capture the western third of the city. General Robertson's troops were to advance to the Weisse Elster river and seize and protect the bridges, if found intact. The 69th Division would enter the city from the south and east and occupy the main portion.

Of the 2nd Division's three regiments, only the northernmost one, the 23rd Infantry (Colonel Jay B. Loveless), advancing along the main road to Leipzig, would become involved in entering the city proper. The 9th Infantry (Colonel P. D. Ginder), advancing in the division's centre, would only pass through and clear the towns and villages to the south-west of the city, but not enter the metropolis itself. The 38th Infantry (Colonel Francis H. Boos), employed on the division's right wing and with one of its battalions detached to the 9th Armored, would stay well south of the city.

Advancing after darkness on April 17, the 23rd Infantry made good progress on the road to Leipzig, entering one small village after another without opposition. However, at Böhlitz-Ehrenberg, a settlement on the close outskirts, the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel William A. Smith) ran into the city's outer defence line, the one manned by Hitlerjugend with Panzerfäuste and small arms. Two forward platoons of Company G were cut off and surrounded for several hours and could only escape by calling down artillery fire on their own positions.

Schlageter Streets were among the first things to go in the de-Nazification of Germany after 1945, the one in Leipzig becoming the Georg-Schwarz-Strasse. Like Shultz, we took our comparison from the upstairs window of No. 92 Merseburger Strasse. An original member of Company I of the 23rd, Shultz had landed with the 2nd Division in June 1944 and fought with them in Normandy, being wounded at Tinchebray in August. He rejoined the unit during the Battle of the Bulge and was appointed regimental photographer in March 1945.

Left: **Shultz next went up into another house to photograph a machine-gun crew of the 2nd Battalion, covering a Leipzig street. (Shultz)** *Above:* **Your Editor, Karel Margry, found the upstairs window was that of the house on the corner of Merseburger Strasse and Hebelstrasse, looking down the side street. Unfortunately the building was locked up during his visit so he had to be content with a comparison taken from the street below.**

A column of Jeeps has stopped on Merseburger Strasse and their occupants stand awaiting further developments. The type of vehicles and outfit of the soldiers suggest that this is the 2nd Battalion headquarters group. They are known to have set up their command post in a hotel in Leipzig-Lindenau, which may well have been the one on the left. (Shultz)

On the morning of April 18 the 23rd Infantry broke into Leipzig. Starting off at dawn, the rifle companies cautiously advanced into the built-up area, assisted by tanks and tank destroyers from the division's regularly attached armoured support units, the 741st Tank Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Skaggs) and the 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Joseph M. Deeley). White flags fluttered from the houses lining the streets and the civilians were out in thick bunches, curiously watching the American soldiers and their vehicles, some of them even welcoming the troops with flowers and drinks.

Now the Merseburger Hof, the place is still in business as a hotel today.

Further down Merseburger Strasse, the locals inquisitively crowd around the American vehicles. (Shultz)

The same view today, looking back westward with Demmeringstrasse on the right (see the map on pages 18-19).

With throngs of civilians going about their business, an M8 armoured car arrives to continue the advance deeper into the city. The M8 may be one from the divisional 2nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop but, in view of the Sherman tank seen following behind, it is more likely that both are from the 741st Tank Battalion, the 2nd Division's armoured support unit. (Shultz)

Looking up Lützner Strasse at the crossroad with Merseburger Strasse. The city centre is down to the right.

Above: **Meanwhile, a little further west in the 2nd Division sector, Tech/5 Weart of the 165th Signal Corps (Photo) Company pictured riflemen of the 23rd Infantry clearing out a Leipzig railway station. (USNA)** *Below:* **With the caption not specifying which Leipzig station the picture showed, Karel was thrilled to find this match at Bahnhof Plagwitz, completely unchanged since the war. Tech/5 Weart took his photo from the cover of a side entrance passageway, looking west across the tracks.**

Above: **Although enemy resistance seemed light as the troops advanced into the city, danger lured around every corner. As it turned from Zschochersche Strasse into Karl-Heine-Strasse, this Sherman of the 741st Tank Battalion was hit by a Panzerfaust fired by a youth of the Hitlerjugend. Two of the crew were killed — the body of one can be seen in front of the tank, covered with a blanket, the other lies slumped against the gated door on the right. Signal Corps photographer Tech/5 R. W. Crampton took his picture from an upstairs window of the house on the opposite corner. (USNA)** *Above right:* **Our comparison was taken from ground level.** *Right:* **A little later, Associated Press photographer Allen pictured the locals swarming around the still smouldering Sherman. The Felsenkeller restaurant on the corner was one of Leipzig's best-known beer halls and meeting places. (IWM)**

Moving down the main road into the city, the Merseburger Strasse, the troops met no resistance until they approached the bridges over the Weisse Elster. All bridges were intact, but the access to them was blocked with stone-filled tramcars and covered by snipers and machine guns set up in the houses on the far side. The main span was the Zeppelin Bridge on Frankfurter Strasse, but the other bridges proved equally well defended. As it turned the corner of Karl-Heine-Strasse, the boulevard leading to the Klinger Bridge, south of the Zeppelin Bridge, a Sherman of the 741st Tank Battalion was hit by a Panzerfaust and set on fire.

Colonel Loveless ordered a coordinated, simultaneous attack on four of the bridges.

At the agreed hour, as the infantry started to move across they were met by a very large volume of small-arms fire, and for several hours the attack seemed stuck.

At the Zeppelin Bridge, the assault pla-

A modern fence now cordons off the battleground of six decades ago and, although the Felsenkeller has survived unchanged, it no longer bears its original name and is sadly in need of restoration.

Karl-Heine-Strasse is the street leading up to the Klinger Bridge across the Weisse Elster, the canalised river that separates western Leipzig from the main city. By noon, the Americans were planning a co-ordinated assault across four of the river's bridges. Tech/5 Crampton pictured men of the 23rd Infantry and M18 Hellcats of the attached 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion waiting for orders to move forward. The Hellcat, light, fast and armed with a 76mm gun, was introduced in 1943 as an alternative to the standard M10 with which most American tank destroyer units were equipped. (USNA)

Odd trees have been felled and the cobblestones covered with asphalt but otherwise Karl-Heine-Strasse remains unchanged. The view is looking back westwards towards the Felsenkeller which lies in the far distance.

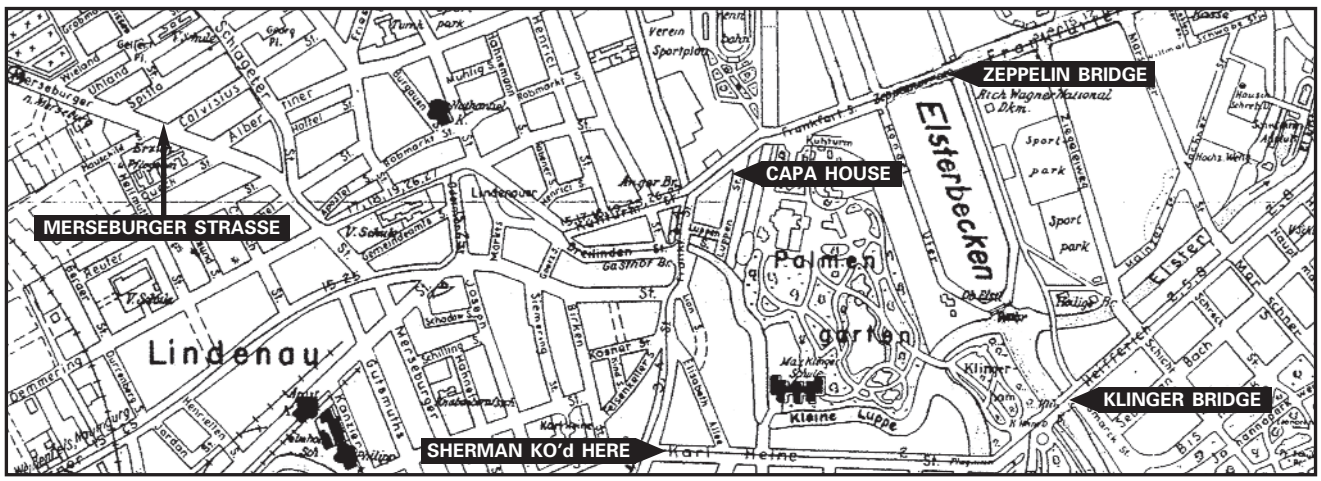
Among the many accredited war photographers covering the capture of Leipzig was Robert Capa of *Life* magazine. He was with Company F of the 23rd Infantry as it attacked the Zeppelin Bridge, the main bridge over the Weisse Elster. Creeping up as close as he could, Capa went into a corner house overlooking the bridge and there found a machine-gun crew *(above)* setting up their water-cooled .30-calibre Browning on the balcony. Both men were wearing looted Luftwaffe sheepskin helmets. Routinely he began photographing as they fired several belts of ammunition at the Germans across the river *(right)*.

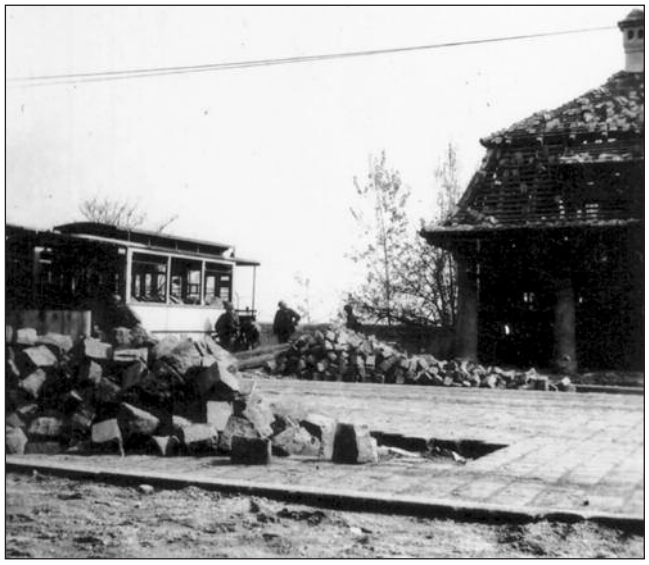
Left: **Suddenly, the young corporal feeding the gun fell hit, killed instantly by a sniper. Capa continued to shoot off frames as the dead soldier lay in a growing puddle of blood. Seconds later another gunner took over *(below)*. What Capa had envisaged as 'the last picture of the war for my camera', became the symbolic image of the 'last soldier to be killed in the war'. *Life* magazine printed Capa's picture in its issue of May 14, however with the face of the young gunner blanked.**

In his memoirs *Slightly Out of Focus*, published in 1947, Capa described the building as 'a fashionable four-storey apartment building on the corner overlooking the bridge'. The only edifice fitting that description is this one, on the south-west corner of what was in 1945 Frankfurter Strasse (today Jahnallee) opposite the Palmengarten (see the map on the page opposite). It is the building closest to the bridge, overlooking it from a distance of about 100 yards. The side balconies on the top floor are today without the wrought-iron railing as seen in Capa's photographs, but there is little doubt that this is the correct building, another clue being the tramcars which can be seen below in the street in the first frame of the machine gunners' sequence. To our frustration, we found the house empty and boarded up so were unable to take comparisons from inside.

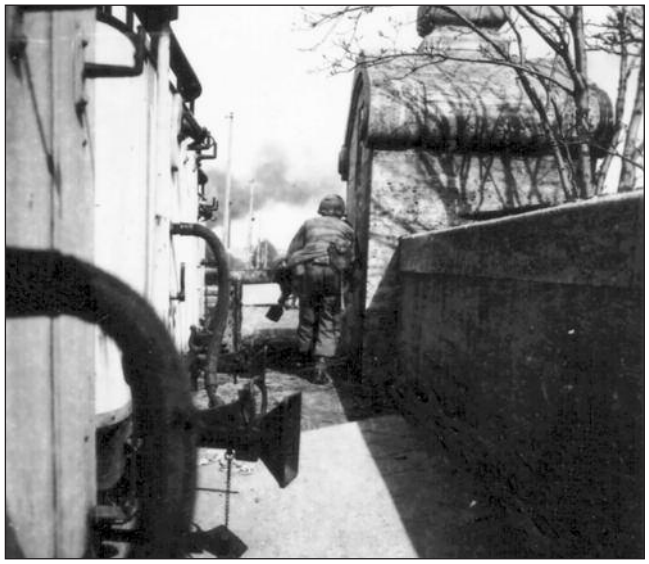
Furious about the death of the corporal, his comrades down below in the street were in an ugly mood and they vented their spleen on the German soldiers surrendering from the bridge defences. Capa photographed a GI stabbing his bayonet at the Hitlerjugend and Volkssturm soldiers appearing from behind the streetcars *(above)*, **and then kicking and slapping them** *(below)*. **According to Capa, the German soldiers had been hiding in the trams and one of the youngsters was the actual sniper responsible for killing the corporal. The US censor forbade publication of these pictures.**

Left: **Looking back westward along Jahnallee today.** *Right:* **Did the graffiti artists of today have any idea of what took place here?**





Left: **Meanwhile, regimental photographer George Shultz was up front even further, going into the attack across the Zeppelin Bridge with the assault platoons. Although the long span stood intact, everybody was afraid that the Germans might blow it any second. In this shot soldiers use the cover of the streetcars, stone-filled to serve as road-blocks, to get onto the bridge. (Shultz)** *Right:* **The bridge sentry houses have gone and the approach ramp is now a small grassy area planted with trees.**



Crouching between the streetcars and the bridge parapet, Shultz follows the riflemen on to the bridge. (Shultz)

Our comparison gives a good idea of the considerable distance which had to be covered by the assault troops.

Then and Now. Twenty paces onto the bridge, a platoon leader gives first aid to one of the men downed in the initial assault. (Shultz)

Left: **With Staff Sergeant Ernest L. Barber undertaking a one-man charge across the bridge and single-handedly eliminating most of the enemy defences, the bridge fell to the Americans. As soon as the fighting was over, the first civilians started coming across making their way to the inner city. (Shultz)** *Right:* **No smoke but trees rising on the east bank today.**

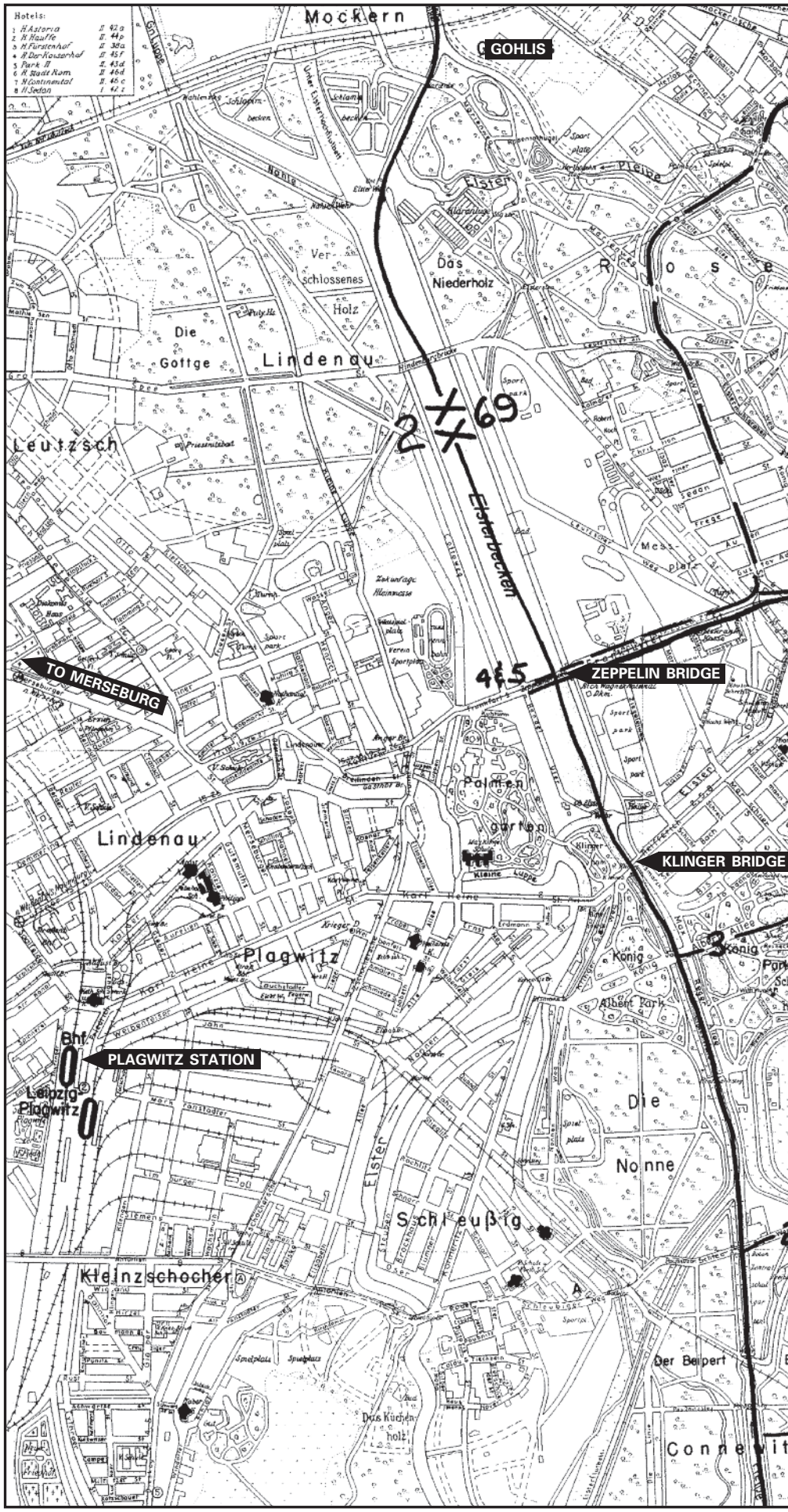
toons of Company F were thrust back. However, Staff Sergeant Ernest L. Barber continued in a mad dash across the wide and long bridge. Reaching the far side, he killed two German defenders in hand-to-hand fighting. The sergeant fell wounded and American mortars and artillery started shelling the area believing him to be dead or captured. But Barber was alive and on his feet. Single-handedly he charged and captured two machine-guns and a 2cm gun, killing their crews with rifle fire. He then captured five Germans and used them as shield while he returned to the bridge and withdrew across back to his own lines. His one-man rampage, which earned him the Distinguished Service Cross, permitted his company to cross and secure the Zeppelin Bridge. Tanks and tank destroyers rolled across and helped the infantry to occupy the first blocks of houses inside the inner city.

Sent out on a mission of their own on the regimental left flank, Company G of the 23rd Infantry followed the Merseburg–Leipzig railway line into town with orders to seize the line's three bridges, two small ones across branch canals of the Weisse Elster and a bigger one across the river itself. Advancing against moderate enemy gun-fire, crossing the bridges or wading the streams, by dusk the company had gained a foothold in the north-western quarter of Gohlis.

By midnight, the 2nd Division had accomplished its Leipzig mission. It occupied a line generally following the Weisse Elster river, had captured all bridges intact, established secure bridgeheads across each of them, and was awaiting link-up with the 69th Division.

Centre: **Crossing over to the town side, Robert Capa pictured men of Company F firing down Gustav-Adolf-Strasse, the parallel street running one block to the north of Frankfurter Strasse. By the end of the day, the 23rd Infantry had captured all bridges over the Weisse Elster, securing a continuous bridgehead into the inner city from the Klinger to the Hindenburg Bridge, plus a smaller foothold in the Gohlis quarter further north.** *Right:* **No. 58 is in fact the westernmost building on the street. It is located on the corner of Hindenburg-Strasse (today Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse), the street that runs parallel with the river. Capa took his picture from across the street behind the other corner house.**

As the 2nd Division entered Leipzig from the west, the 69th Division attacked into the city from the south-east and east. This map shows the divisional boundaries, the sectors assigned to the 272nd and 273rd Infantry Regiments, and the five phase lines controlling the 69th Division's advance into the city. We have indicated the main locations featuring in our story. This original map was kept by Major Joe Lipsius, the 272nd regimental S-2, and donated to the Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in 2003. (Lipsius)



THE 69th DIVISION ATTACKS INTO THE CITY

By the morning of April 18, all three regiments of General Reinhardt's 69th Division had circled around Leipzig and reached assembly areas within sight of the city limits. The 271st Infantry was in position south of the city, around Pegau and Rötha; the 273rd Infantry was in the south-east, at Liebertwolkwitz; and the 272nd had reached Borsdorf, due east of the city.

The division's assault on the city would begin at 1245 and commence without artillery preparation. The plan was to attack with two regiments only, the 272nd from the east along the axis of Reichsstrasse 6 (the main road from Dresden), the 273rd from the south-east along Landstrasse 176 (the main road from Grimma). The third regiment, the 271st (Colonel Henry B. Margeson), was assigned to clear Zwenkau, a small town on the southern outskirts of the city, which was still enemy-infested and would prove a hard nut to crack. All three regiments would receive armoured support from the division's regular attachments, the 777th Tank Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel David T. Zweibel) and the 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Donald B. Miller).

Assigned the responsibility for capturing the eastern two-third of Leipzig, the division staff planners had divided this part of the city into five different zones, each to be occupied in turn and delineated by a phase line. Phase Line 1 was just inside the city's built-up area, just beyond the Battle of the Nations Monument and along the trace of the city's east circular railway; Phase Line 2 was half a mile deeper into the city and followed a semi-circle of boulevards: from the Kronprinzstrasse in the south to Lindenallee in the north-east; Phase Line 3 was another mile further on and ran right along the southern and eastern limits of the inner city, just short of the city hall and the Hauptbahnhof. Phase Line 4 cleared the entire inner city and pulled the advance past the Hauptbahnhof; and Phase Line 5 cleared the large Rosental parkland area in the north-western part of the city.

The plan was for the 272nd and 273rd Regimental Combat Teams to start a simultaneous drive into the city, moving from one phase line to another. At each line, whichever regiment arrived first would wait for the other to catch up before moving the attack further. The 272nd would generally aim for the Hauptbahnhof and the 273rd for the city hall. However, each regiment was instructed to hold a small tank/infantry force ready for quick deployment. If enemy resistance proved light, or an opportunity offered itself, this mobile column was to make a rapid dash to the heart of the city and achieve a link-up with the 2nd Division moving in from the west.

The 69th divisional artillery were in position south and east of Leipzig. The 888th Field Artillery Battalion, assigned to support the 272nd Infantry, had its guns set up eight miles to the east of the city. They would be firing westward, back to their own lines, so a special maximum-range limit was issued lest their shells hit the friendly troops of the 2nd Division moving in from the west.

TOWN PLAN
LEIPZIG
Scale 1:12,500
LEGEND
Railroad stations
Streetcar lines
Bus lines
Post Office
Theater
Concert hall
Monuments
Main exits
Gohlis
Schönefeld
Post-Bhf.
Bhf Lpz-Alfred-Kindler-St
Neustadt
Volkmarsdf.
TO PAUNSDORF
Haupt-Bhf
HAUPTBAHNHOF
Reudnitz
Neu
Sellerhausen
Crottendorf
Anger
NEUES RATHAUS
Johannapark
272
273
Leipzig-Eilenburger Bhf.
Reudnitz
Anger
Bayerscher Bhf.
Neureudnitz
Reudn
Thonberg
Bhf Leipzig Stötteritz
Stötteritz
Messe
Ausstellungs
Gelände
Denkmals
Park
BATTLE OF THE NATIONS MONUMENT

Left: **The 273rd Infantry drove into Leipzig along the axis of Highway 176, which became Preussenstrasse as it entered the outskirts of the city. The road led directly past the Battle of the Nations Monument where, unknown to the Americans, the German Combat Commander of Leipzig, Oberst Hans von Poncet, had entrenched himself with 300 of his best men. As the 273rd's spearhead, a tank/infantry column known as Task Force Zweibel, rolled past the monument it was subjected to a rain of small-arms fire from the building. The 2nd Battalion, which reached the spot later in the afternoon, got the same reception and, unable to overcome the enemy nest, bypassed it for the time being. Lee Miller of *Vogue* magazine, one of a small band of female war photographers in the European Theatre, pictured GMC trucks rolling past the monument. (Lee Miller Archives)** *Right:* **Preussenstrasse has since been renamed Prager Strasse but the massive monument still towers over it as before.**

273rd Infantry, April 18

For the attack into the city, the 273rd Regiment had only two of its organic battalions available, the 3rd Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Leo W. Shaughnessy) being away on detachment to CCR of the 9th Armored Division. To make up for the deficiency, the 273rd was given the 1st Battalion of the 271st. For armoured support, the regiment had the Sherman tanks from Company C of the 777th Tank Battalion and the M10s tank destroyers from Company B of the 661st TD Battalion.

The regimental commander, Colonel Charles M. Adams, assigned battalion missions as follows. The 1st Battalion would attack on the right along a minor road through the suburb of Holzhausen; the 2nd Battalion would advance astride the main road, Landstrasse 176; and the attached 1st Battalion of the 271st would be committed on the left of the main road.

At 1245, the attack jumped off. The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel William D. Salladin) encountered stiff resistance as it approached Holzhausen, but once inside the city proper the battalion made good progress.

The 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel John M. Lynch), astride the main road, soon came up against well dug-in enemy positions near the Sports Stadium in the suburb of Probstheida. It was 1800 before the battalion, supported by fire from medium tanks of 2nd Platoon of Company C, and light tanks of 2nd Platoon of Company D, 777th Tank Battalion, captured the sports park.

The 1st Battalion of the 271st (Lieutenant Colonel John G. Dunlap, Jr.) on the left flank had a difficult start. As Company A advanced toward Phase Line 1, it was pinned down by enemy automatic weapons. Light tanks of the 3rd Platoon of D Company, 777th, were brought up and reduced the enemy fire, allowing the infantry to proceed to the first phase line.

With all battalions apparently having overcome initial resistance, Colonel Adams issued orders for a rapid dash into the city. At 1700 hours, a special tank/infantry column had been formed and held ready for such a purpose. Based around the 777th Tank Battalion and named Task Force Zweibel, after the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel David T. Zweibel, it consisted of the Tank Section of Battalion Headquarters, the Assault Gun Platoon of Headquarters Company, 2nd Platoon of Company C, and 1st Platoon of Company D — all of the 777th Tank Battalion; 1st Platoon of Company B, 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and finally the riflemen of Company F of the 2nd Battalion, 273rd Infantry. A total force of seven M4 Shermans, four M5 Stuart light tanks, three Sherman 105mm assault guns, two M3 half-tracks, five M10 tank destroyers and about 185 riflemen

At 1730 Task Force Zweibel moved off from Liebertwolkwitz and into Leipzig on Highway 176 with the infantry riding on the tanks, its objective being the Leipzig city hall. Right from the start, the column received heavy machine-gun fire, which caused severe casualties to the infantry mounted on the tanks. Many men fell or jumped off the vehicles. The column rolled on, the armoured vehicles firing their machine guns, and the infantry their small arms.

As the column approached the Battle of the Nations Monument, Oberst von Poncet's men entrenched inside opened fire on it with everything they had: rifles, machine guns, Panzerfäuste and a 2cm gun — causing more heavy casualties among the riflemen and knocking out one of the Shermans.

At this point, Zweibel ordered the four light tanks to withdraw, while he and the remainder of the column moved on at full speed. Heavy fire continued all the way to the city centre. At the last street before the city hall, Zweibel met an Italian airman (a member of the Italian armed forces interned in Germany) who told him that there were at least 300 SS troops in the area. Due to the use of old maps, the column overshot its objective, the city hall, and ended up at the other end of the big open space which lay in front of it. This placed the task force in a very precarious position. Pinned down by the German garrison in the city hall and unable to move forward or bring fire on the enemy, the tanks were forced to remain where they were, defending themselves by fire until darkness, when they were finally able to withdraw a few blocks to consolidate their position. Zweibel decided to await the arrival of the main force and began making plans for an assault on the city hall next morning.

Meanwhile, the 273rd Infantry had been making a slow advance into the city. In the 1st Battalion sector, Company B, supported by medium tanks of 1st Platoon of Company C, 777th Tank Battalion, fought their way into the centre, destroying 12 machine guns, killing 50 enemy and forcing the surrender of several strong points.

The 2nd Battalion, continuing its push down the main road, came up against the Battle of Nations Monument, bypassed by Zweibel's armoured column two hours before and still manned by Poncet's force. An initial assault at 2000 hours met such fierce resistance that the regimental commander, Colonel Adams, decided to momentarily leave the hornet's nest and deal with it later. While tanks and tank destroyers kept the monument under fire and divisional artillery submitted it to a constant artillery barrage, the 2nd Battalion moved on past the edifice towards Phase Line 1, which ran immediately beyond it.

By midnight the 273rd Regiment had reached Phase Line 4 and cleared most of their zones within the city. They had contacted the 272nd Infantry on their right and sent out patrols to contact the 2nd Division away to their left. Patrols had linked up with Task Force Zweibel at the city hall. However, much of Zweibel's force was still isolated and its position remained insecure.

While the 273rd Infantry penetrated Leipzig from the south-east, the 272nd Infantry was entering from the east. As he moved into the city with the 2nd Battalion, Signal Corps photographer Tech/5 Fred Poinsett came across this scene of civilians carting and hauling off goods from a building on Riesaer Strasse in the factory district of Paunsdorf. Plundering by civilians was widespread during the battle. (USNA)

272nd Infantry, April 18

The other regiment of the 69th Division, the 272nd Infantry moving in from the east, had also jumped off at 1245. The regiment, commanded by Colonel Walter D. Buie, advanced with two battalions up, the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Allen D. Raymond) on the left and the 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Wayne G. Springer) on the right. The 2nd Battalion attacked along the main road and the 1st Battalion along a parallel road just south of there. Each battalion was supported by one platoon of Sherman tanks from Company B of the 777th Tank Battalion and one platoon of M10s from the 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion, with the 4.2-inch mortars of 3rd Platoon, Company A of the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion attached to the 2nd Battalion.

Each battalion had a so-called Battle Patrol which scouted out the route in advance of the attacking rifle companies. As it entered Paunsdorf on the city outskirts, 2nd Battalion's Battle Patrol under 1st Lieutenant Donald W. Blair and its accompanying platoon of tanks ran into heavy resistance, the Germans engaging them with machine-gun, small-arms and Panzerfaust fire. With the help of the tanks the small force soon captured the suburb, taking 150 prisoners. They then waited for the main body of the battalion to arrive. Leaving a force behind to clear remaining resistance and keep open the route of communication, the battalion continued the advance. Bomb craters in the road hampered forward movement.

Shortly after, both battalions crossed the Leipzig city limits. As they entered the built-up area, the Americans found many civilians out in the streets cheering and waving white flags. Mixed among them were groups of slave labourers. Some tried to press flowers and glasses of beer on the soldiers. The crowds had to be threatened with rifles before they would withdraw to the building line or inside the houses. Everywhere, as soon as the Americans arrived, civilians and freed foreign workers alike resorted to widespread plundering of warehouses, food depots and cargo trains in the area, hauling away everything they could.

The advance continued at a slow pace against sniper resistance, with the tanks spearheading, sweeping the streets and buildings ahead with heavy fire. The civilians seemed completely unmindful of the flying steel and dispersed only when one of the tanks fired off a shell.

Riesaer Strasse was and still is the main road into Leipzig from the east. Paunsdorf was home to Leipzig's sprawling Hasag works. Originally a company producing electric bulbs, it turned over to armaments production becoming Germany's main manufacturer of hand-grenades and Panzerfäuste. (Niemann)

From exactly the same spot, but now looking toward the city centre, Poinsett pictured riflemen of Company G of the 272nd moving forward in single file. (USNA)

Some 800 yards east of Phase Line 1, the 2nd Battalion again ran into resistance at an underpass on Riesaer Strasse. This was overcome with the help of tank, mortar and artillery fire. By 1530, both battalions had reached Phase Line 1 but here were stopped by heavy resistance.

In view of the enemy opposition, the battalions reorganised their attack. Each now advanced with two companies abreast, each company moving down a separate street, with a platoon of tanks supporting the north or right-hand company in each battalion, and companies keeping contact by radio. In the 1st Battalion zone the attacking companies were B and C, with Company B on the north; in the 2nd Battalion zone, it was Companies F and G, with Company G on the north.

As before, the battalion Battle Patrols probed in advance of the attacking companies, moving until stopped by sniper fire. Here and there it appeared as if civilians formed a shield for the snipers. As the Americans approached, the civilians would disappear and the snipers would open up on the advancing troops. One such crowd of civilians was responsible for Private Cecil F. Coker of the 2nd Battalion's Battle Patrol being killed, thus hindering the patrol's further operations.

By dusk, after meeting opposition all along the way, both battalions had arrived generally along Phase Line 2 and the position was consolidated. At 1900, as darkness closed in, the 2nd Battalion was instructed to form a task force consisting of tanks and infantry to move through the city as rapidly as possible and gain contact with the 2nd Division who were known to have reached points west of Phase Line 5.

The task force was made up of the 2nd Platoon of Company B, 777th — five Sherman tanks — and the 1st Platoon of Company F riding on the deck of the tanks. After extricating themselves from road-blocks and other debris in the streets, the small force moved out noisily down the dark Eisenbahnstrasse, not knowing what awaited them. At 2005, as the column's lead Sherman passed beyond the huge Hauptbahnhof, there was an ear-splitting explosion, and a Panzerfaust projectile struck the tank and knocked it out. The blast knocked most of the riflemen off the vehicle, killing one and wounding two others, and the rest scrambled off. The tank crew dismounted too, but its commander was killed.

One of the Shermans fired back at the station — a massive stone structure, the largest railway station in Germany — but its 75mm shells had little effect on the heavy masonry. Undaunted, the tank commander drove his tank into the building itself, crashing from one room to another and firing at the snipers in an attempt to drive them out into the streets so that they could be engaged by the riflemen.

In the meantime, the infantry platoon, now dismounted, set up a perimeter defence in the small park in front of the station. The platoon leader sent a patrol back to contact the main body of troops. By then night had fallen. Although there was some moonlight, it was now so dark within the streets and between buildings that the snipers could not be seen. In the darkness and confusion of battle, the patrol missed its road back and was ambushed by a sub-machine gun and snipers. Sergeant Louis J. Kelly was killed but Pfc Oscar W. Hahn, armed with a Browning Automatic Rifle, turned and cut down the Germans. Although wounded in three places, he then walked back to his platoon, traded his weapon for an M3 sub-

Looking down Riesaer Strasse on a dull September day 60 years later. (Neimann)

Advancing against sniper fire and roadblocks, the 272nd Infantry ran into serious opposition at the Hauptbahnhof, the main railway station. Here at dusk the small tank/infantry column spearheading the regimental combat team was stopped by enemy fire from the station building. While the American tanks fired back at the building — a futile effort in view of its sturdy walls — the accompanying infantry platoon took cover in the small park in front of it. Much of the German garrison of the station sneaked away during the night and it was not until the following morning that the remainder surrendered. Tech/5 Crampton photographed a Military Policeman escorting three prisoners to the temporary stockade in the park opposite the station. According to the wartime caption the three men were German soldiers who had changed into civilian clothes. (USNA)

machine gun, and stood guard over the prisoners his comrades had meanwhile collected, ten soldiers including an SS captain. Another ten enemy soldiers had been killed.

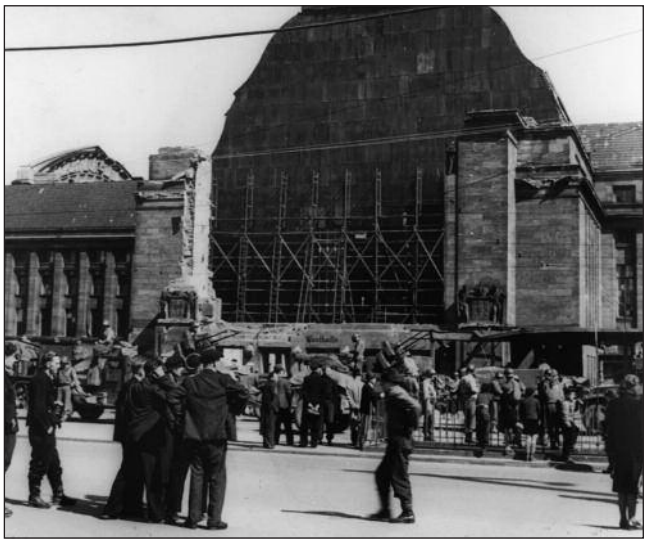
Unable to progress beyond the station, the tanks kept the building under fire, but their shells just bounced off from the fortress-like walls. Because of the darkness and the difficulty of observation, it was considered too risky to call down artillery on the building.

As the battle raged, 1st Lieutenant Charles W. Brown, the 2nd Battalion surgeon, with Staff Sergeant Lester Findley, came tearing up the street in their Medics' Jeep and, heedless of the surrounding danger, proceeded to evacuate the wounded from the scene. When this had been accomplished, the patrol withdrew.

Meanwhile, the main body of the regiment had been pushing on and by 2100 were located generally along Phase Line 3. It was then so dark in the streets that the riflemen had to hold on to each other to keep from getting lost or separated. Orders were given for the troops to consolidate their present position and clean out resistance in their areas.

The fire fight at the station lasted for two hours. At 2200, the armour and infantry withdrew to the battalion positions at Phase Line 3. While some tanks were left along the phase line to keep up the pressure on the railway station, others started reconnaissance for a route around it. At the same time strong foot patrols were sent out, looking for ways to contact the 2nd Division on the far side of the city.

Built in 1902-15, Leipzig Hauptbahnhof was and still is the largest terminal station building in Europe. The tree hides most of the huge edifice in this comparison taken from the spot where Nikolaistrasse emerges on to what is today Willy-Brandt-Platz.



Left: **The morning after the night battle, civilians survey the American troops and vehicles outside the station's Westhalle entrance. Although the Hauptbahnhof had been struck by the tank and tank destroyer shells fired at it the previous night, most of the damage to it had been caused by Allied bombs during the preceding two years. Picture by Allan Jackson of International News Service. (IWM)** *Right:* **Repaired after the war, and fully renovated in 1990, the station has regained its former stature.**

During the night of April 18/19, Captain Charles B. MacDonald, 22-year-old commander of Company G of the 2nd Division's 23rd Infantry, went into enemy-held Leipzig to negotiate the possible surrender of the city with Generalmajor Wilhelm von Grolman, the commander of the city's 3,400-strong police force. The surrender talks between the lowly captain and the general fell flat when Grolman could not guarantee that his offer would also include the Wehrmacht troops in the city. However, the German agreed to accompany MacDonald back to American lines hoping to continue his talks with higher headquarters. After the war MacDonald would write *Company Commander* (1947), one of the classic infantry accounts to come out of the war (see *After the Battle* No. 73). Joining the Office of the Chief of Military History (today the US Army Center for Military History) in 1949, he was an official Army historian for 30 years, heading the European Section and writing two volumes of the Official History of the US Army in World War II and several other standard accounts of American WWII battles. He died on December 4, 1990. Describing his Leipzig adventure in *Company Commander,* MacDonald also related the following: 'Two war correspondents were on hand when I returned to my CP. One was an attractive American girl whose clear American voice sounded good in the strange surroundings. "I heard you had quite an experience last night", she said. "Also I'd like to get stories on these boys you've rescued here in the hospital." [MacDonald's Company G had liberated a group of Allied POWs in a hospital in Gohlis the evening before.] I invited them to spend the night with us. I decided that we were one of the few rifle companies in the US Army who could boast of having an American girl spend the night in its CP in such forward positions. She was Lee Miller of *Vogue* magazine.' When we read this account, we consulted the Lee Miller Archives and sure enough one of her frames showed Captain MacDonald with Miller on the morning after his venture into Leipzig! It was taken with her camera by her colleague, David E. Scherman of *Life*. He and Miller were close buddies during the war and often swapped cameras. (Lee Miller Archives)

SURRENDER TALKS

Meanwhile, on the German side, a quite unexpected development had been taking place. That morning, with the Americans at the gates of the city, General von Grolman had decided the time had come to surrender the city to the Americans. Early in the afternoon, in a radio broadcast to the population, he had announced that he had taken command of the city and would do his best to protect the inhabitants, calling on them to keep calm and refrain from plundering. Learning from a civilian that the Americans had arrived in western Leipzig, he decided to put his offer of surrender to them, so he sent out one of his majors to contact the Americans.

As men of Company G of the 23rd Infantry, 2nd Division, were settling down for the night in the Gohlis district in northwest Leipzig on the east bank of the Weisse Elster, a police Oberleutnant approached the American lines with word that his General wanted to surrender the city. The German was taken back to see the company commander, Captain Charles B. MacDonald, who could not believe his ears when his men grinningly asked 'Do you want to capture Leipzig?'

Lured by the prospect of being a protagonist in the capitulation of a major city, and after getting the OK from battalion and regiment, MacDonald with five of his men and an SCR300 radio in two Jeeps went into the enemy-held part of Leipzig with the Oberleutnant. The German took them to the Gohlis police station where MacDonald was taken to see a police Major. As he was introduced to the smartly-uniformed German staff, the young American captain to his surprise found himself imitating the stiff heel-clicking and slight bow of his hosts. None of the Germans spoke any good English. Using Pfc Walter G. Harms as his interpreter, MacDonald tried to find out what the German proposal entailed but he was dismayed when the major told him that the General only controlled the police and not the Wehrmacht troops in the city. To MacDonald, this made the entire offer pointless for how could there be a surrender if there was no guarantee that the German soldiers would not fight. Insisting that it would be no problem, the major then offered MacDonald to take him to see the General. Unwilling to give up, MacDonald accepted.

Before they left, the major telephoned General Grolman at his headquarters in the city centre. He explained to him that the Americans were not satisfied with just the police capitulating but that it was necessary for the Wehrmacht troops to stop fighting too. Grolman said he would try to persuade Oberst von Poncet and then phone back. (For some reason, Grolman was under the impression that his major had reached and was phoning from an American divisional headquarters, and the General thus believed that he was in direct contact with the American commanding general — whereas in actual fact he was negotiating with a lowly company commander.)

Meanwhile, back on the American side, the exciting news of a possible surrender of Leipzig was being passed up the chain of command. Regiment called Division HQ. The division commander, General Robertson, immediately radioed his corps commander, General Huebner, who in turn telephoned General Hodges, the First Army commander, that he was about to negotiate the surrender of Leipzig. Hodges replied that that surrender could only be accepted if it was unconditional.

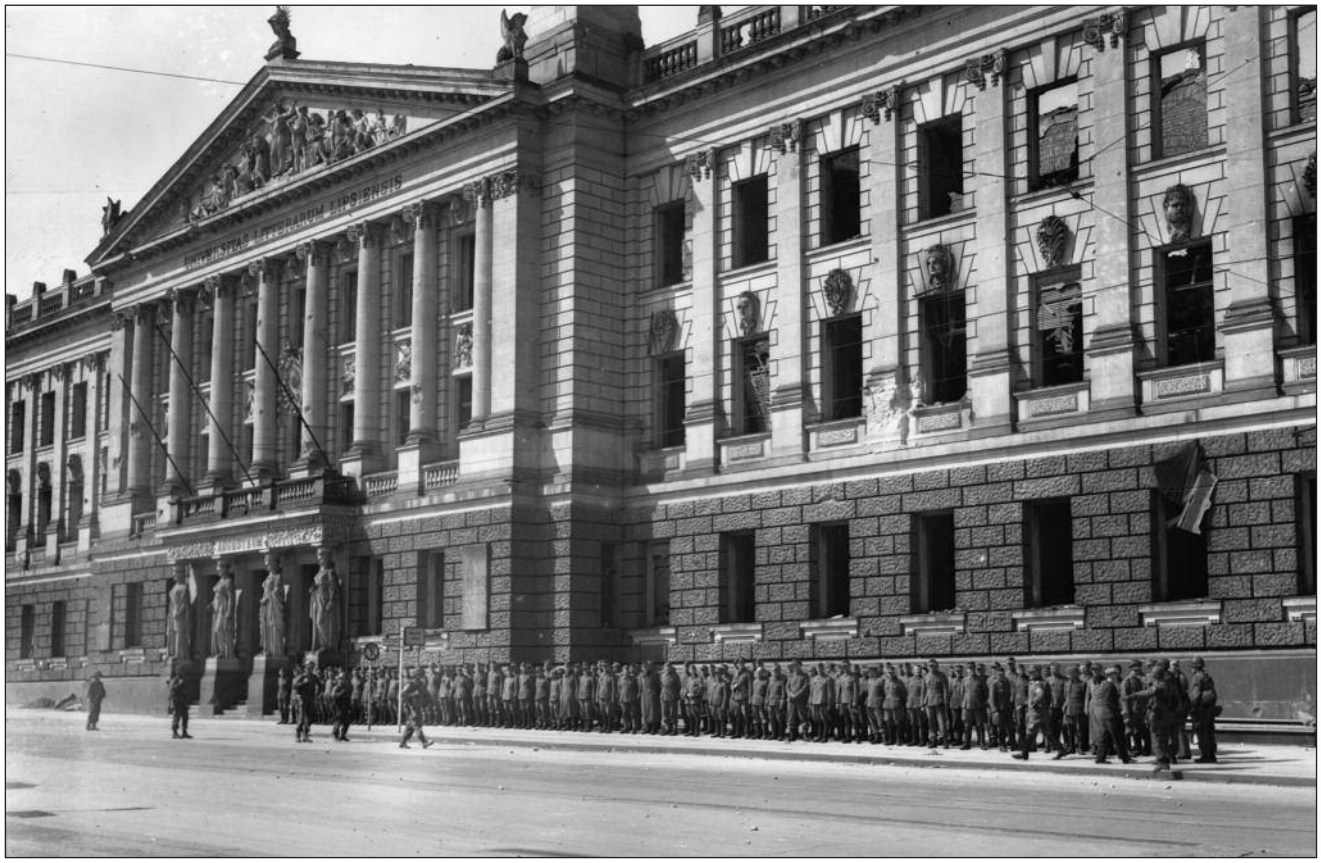
Whether this was going to happen was just then being decided. After his telephone call with his major at the Gohlis police station, General Grolman, after some effort, got a telephone call through to Oberst von Poncet's battle command post. This was inside the Battle of the Nations Monument but Grolman did not know this and Poncet did not tell him. Grolman informed Poncet about his overture to the Americans, but Poncet replied that he had absolutely no intention of surrendering and hung up. Thus rebuffed, Grolman phoned back to the Gohlis police station to say that he had been unable to convince the Kampfkommandant to stop fighting. However, by that time, MacDonald was already on his way to Grolman's police headquarters.

Taking only Pfc Harms with him, and leaving his other men to accept the cognac offered by the German staff and offer cigarettes and K-rations in return, MacDonald had stepped into a luxurious chauffeur-driven Mercedes-Benz with the Major and Oberleutnant and set off through the dark and deserted streets of Leipzig. To his surprise the Germans proceeded to drive right through American-held parts of the city. Twice during the bizarre journey the car was stopped by American guards, first of Company E, then of Company F, and MacDonald had to talk hard to convince the sentries that he was really an American officer on his way to negotiate for the city's surrender.

Entering the inner city past sections of bombed-out buildings, the car finally reached police headquarters. The two Americans were led past a series of stiffly saluting sentries, up a curving marble staircase and into an elaborately furnished conference room. As General Grolman entered the room, MacDonald, acutely aware of his dishevelled combat uniform, again found himself imitating the stiff military behaviour of the Germans. The General — immaculately dressed, with a chest full of decorations and a monocle in his eye — reminded him of the archetypal German officer from Hollywood movies. Grolman had brought a civilian, a professor of English, as his interpreter. Cognac was served and the General proposed a toast in German, which was not translated.

Getting down to business, Grolman proceeded to elaborate his offer to surrender the city. As before, it soon became clear that he only controlled the city's 3,400-strong police force but not the military forces. When MacDonald asked him if he could guarantee that there would be no resistance from the Wehrmacht, Grolman said that was impossible. He had no control over the military and at this moment did not even know where to contact the city's combat commander.

The conversation went around and around, always returning to the same point. By midnight, aware that he was getting nowhere and anxious to get back, MacDonald suggested that the General and his staff come with him to his battalion headquarters and see his colonel. Grolman immediately accepted.



Soldiers of the 272nd Infantry round up members of the Leipzig police force in front of the bomb-damaged university building on Augustusplatz on April 19. Due to Police General von Grolman's decision not to release his forces for the defence of the city, his policemen were not involved in any of the street fighting with the Americans. However, they were still taken prisoner because it was rumoured that the police were shooting Russian and Polish slave labourers who were roaming the street. Picture by Tech/5 Poinsett. (USNA)

Taking the General's own open-top car — with Grolman himself at the wheel, MacDonald in the co-driver's seat, the professor and a staff major in the back, and Pfc Harms and the Oberleutnant on the running boards of the lead car — the party drove off. Retracing their route through the dark streets they passed into American-held territory unchallenged, crossing the Weisse Elster by way of the Zeppelin Bridge. MacDonald dropped the General and his party off at 2nd Battalion headquarters in the western district of Lindenau, where Major Vern L. Joseph, the Executive Officer, decided he would keep the General at his HQ for the night and send him on to Corps Military Government in the morning.

MacDonald just had time for a short nap, then was ordered by Major Joseph to take the German Major and Oberleutnant back to German lines so that they could let Grolman's office know where the General was going. Taking a Jeep, MacDonald with Pfc Harms escorted the Mercedes back across the Zeppelin Bridge and into German territory, took leave of the Germans and then drove back to his own Company CP in Gohlis. By the time he got there, the men he had left behind at the Gohlis police station had returned as well. By now it was 0400. For MacDonald, it had been a long, absurd, almost dreamlike night. As far as Grolman was concerned, despite all his good intentions, his courageous act had been of no consequence to the battle of Leipzig.

APRIL 19

While the stillborn surrender negotiations unrolled during the night, the 69th Division continued with its operations. The men of the 272nd Infantry got only a few hours sleep for not long after midnight the 1st and 2nd Battalions were ordered to resume the advance. Bypassing the resistance around the Hauptbahnhof, the riflemen moved forward through the dark, still city streets, tensely expecting a burst of enemy fire with every step. However, nothing of the sort happened. As the riflemen passed totally blacked-out houses, white flags began to appear. The 2nd Battalion intercepted a large column of German soldiers who, in their surprise, made no effort to escape and were taken into custody.

By 0230 the two battalions had reached Phase Line 4. Two hours later, they arrived at Phase Line 5. Soon after, Company B of the 1st Battalion, stalking silently through the Rosental park, made contact with the 2nd Division's 23rd Infantry. The night advance through the dark, unknown city had paid off. None of the troops had got lost — a remarkable achievement and evidence of good co-ordination by the American company commanders and platoon leaders.

At daylight, the 2nd Battalion brought up its tanks, using them to clear out any remaining snipers in their zone and started patrolling to the north to clean the northern section of the city. At 0630, the 1st Battalion started the return trip to mop up the remaining resistance in its zone and to surmount the resistance nest bypassed at the Hauptbahnhof. However on arrival there, they found to their surprise and relief that the enemy troops had vanished from the station building. A short time before, a four-man Forward Observer party from the 888th Field Artillery Battalion, moving into the city to assist the 272nd Infantry, had boldly entered the station and captured over 150 prisoners, plus a large quantity of arms.

Meanwhile, fighting was still going on

The ruin of the neo-Renaissance Augusteum university building was blown up by the East Germans in 1968 and replaced by a typical specimen of GDR architecture.

Left: **The main German strong point in the city centre was the Neues Rathaus (New City Hall) on Martin-Luther-Ring. Here some 500 Volkssturm troops led by the fanatic commander of the Leipzig Volkssturm, former NSDAP-Kreisleiter and former Mayor Walther Dönicke, had entrenched themselves with a large quantity of arms, ammunition and food. Task Force Zweibel reached the Neues Rathaus late on the first day but was repelled and broken up by the intense fire coming from the building. It was not until the following morning, after American tanks and tank destroyers had pummelled the city hall for an hour and 40 minutes from point-blank range, that the garrison capitulated. George Shultz pictured the embattled building shortly after. (Shultz)** *Right:* **Built between 1899 and 1905 in traditional style, its tall tower a landmark of Leipzig, the Neues Rathaus is still the dominating feature at the southern end of the city centre.**

around the city hall. During the night, the position of Task Force Zweibel had remained insecure. At 0300, its infantry component — Company F of the 273rd — radioed back that they were surrounded. A rifle platoon of Company A of the 271st was sent to their aid but was immediately pinned down by enemy fire from the city hall. Another platoon, with two light tanks from the 3rd Platoon of Company D, 777th, was sent to relieve the two stricken forces. The tanks, commanded by Staff Sergeant Coffenberg and Sergeant Smith, fired at the city hall until the Company A platoon could withdraw, but Company F remained isolated.

At 0530, another attempt was made to relieve Company F. Two light tanks, commanded by Staff Sergeants John G. Hudock and Merle S. Tool, plus infantry of Company A once more moved against the city hall but again the German garrison was entirely too strong for the small force and the attack was repulsed. While the remaining three tanks of the 3rd Platoon kept the big building under fire, Hudock and Tool drove their tanks out in the open to evacuate wounded infantrymen from the bullet-swept square.

At 0730, Task Force Zweibel renewed its assault on the city hall. For an hour and 40 minutes, all available tanks and tank destroyers fired their weapons at the building at a point-blank range of 150 yards. Then at 0910, Zweibel sent a captured German air raid policeman, Leutnant der Feuerschutzpolizei Othmer, back into the now-battered edifice to deliver an ultimatum saying that, unless the commander surrender immediately, the Americans would attack in 20 minutes with heavy artillery, flame-throwers and a full division of infantry. Zweibel's bluff had the desired effect for at 0930 the German commandant accepted the terms and a few minutes later the defenders poured out of the doors with their hands up. Captured were one major-general, 175 enlisted men, and 13 Gestapo policemen.

Searching the huge building, the Ameri-

I went up a shattered stairway to the upper floor of Leipzig's Town Hall. Many rooms were damaged by shells, others almost untouched. I went with two American soldiers who carried Tommy guns at the ready, since we were the first to explore the inside of the building. In one room, which had been the Oberbürgermeister's Council Room, was a grisly spectacle. Three Volkssturmers lay sprawled, dead, over tables, with pools of blood on the floor — they had committed suicide. By the side of one was a bottle of cognac and a half-empty glass. He'd evidently needed courage. Most papers had already been removed, but otherwise most furniture in the rooms not hit by shells was intact and normal.

After exploring the Town Hall, I went into the neighbouring building. In an air raid shelter I found a small group of Germans who staff the Town Hall restaurant. They told me that the Oberbürgermeister and his wife and daughter had also committed suicide. Among these Germans was the caretaker of the Town Hall. He had the keys of the whole building. I took him over to the Rathaus, and asked which was the Oberbürgermeister's office. He took me upstairs to some doors which I'd found locked. He took a bunch of keys and opened the door. I shouted 'Anyone there?' No reply. I went into a luxuriously furnished, oak-panelled room. Seated at a large desk was Oberbürgermeister Freyberg, his hands on the table, his shaven head tilted back. Opposite, in the armchair, sat his wife; beside her in the other armchair, sat his daughter, a flaxen-haired 20-year-old wearing spectacles. On the desk was a phial, with its stopper lying beside it. They were all dead. The caretaker said he thought they'd committed suicide yesterday, or perhaps the day before. He told me Freyberg had been Bürgermeister for about nine years, and thought he'd been a party member, he'd wanted to declare Leipzig an open town, but had been overruled. On the wall, opposite the dead man, was a large oil painting of Hitler.

There was another locked door, leading out of this room — the caretaker opened it. Here Chief City Treasurer Doktor Lisso lay slumped on his desk. On a sofa, opposite, lay his daughter, wearing hospital nurse's uniform. In an armchair sat Lisso's wife. Once again, on the table was an empty, unlabelled phial. By Lisso's side were two automatic pistols — but he had chosen poison.

In an ante-room a dead Volkssturmer lay on the floor with 20- and 50-mark notes scattered around him — he, too, had poisoned himself. The caretaker seemed entirely unmoved by this terrible spectacle. We ordered the caretaker to lock up the doors again, and walked downstairs.

EDWARD WARD, BBC BROADCAST, APRIL 19, 1945

Suicide by poison. The macabre scene found inside the Deputy Mayor's office in the City Hall: Dr Kurt Lisso, Leipzig's Deputy Mayor and Chief Treasurer, his wife and 20-year-old daughter wearing her German Red Cross uniform. (USNA)

cans found vast stores of arms, food and liquor. However, a strange and grittier scene awaited the GIs in the upstairs rooms. In his office, they found the city mayor, Oberbürgermeister Freyberg, seated at his desk and his wife and 19-year-old daughter sitting in armchairs — all three had committed suicide by taking poison. In the adjoining room sat the city's Deputy Mayor and Chief Treasurer, Dr. Kurt Lisso, also with his spouse and 20-year-old daughter — they too had taken suicide pills. All six had taken their lives in the early hours of April 18, before the fighting reached the inner city. In an ante-room lay Kreisleiter Dönicke, the Volkssturm commandant, and in the Council Room two of his officers, SA-Oberführer Paul Strobel and NSDAP-Kreisleiter Willy Wiederroth, in pools of blood — they had shot themselves.

By 1000 all organised resistance within the

Left: **A close-up of Dr Lisso. Note the thin layer of chalk dust covering the desk — evidence of the Allied shelling a few hours previously. The two automatic pistols described by BBC reporter Edward Ward in his account as lying beside Lisso have gone — no doubt looted by an American GI. (USNA)** *Right:* **Ex-Kreisleiter and former Oberbürgermeister Walter Dönicke, in his Volkssturm general's uniform, lies on the dust-covered floor in an upstairs ante-room, a torn picture of Hitler beside his clenched fist. One of the few local commanders in favour of defending Leipzig to the last bullet, he had killed himself rather than surrender. These pictures inside the City Hall were all taken by Signal Corps photographer Tech/5 J. M. Heslop. Several other war photographers — among them Lee Miller and Margaret Bourke-White — took similar pictures of the Lisso family lying dead in the office and of Dönicke sprawling dead on the ante-room floor, but strangely enough none of them seems to have gone into the adjoining room and record the suicide scene of Oberbürgermeister Alfred Freyberg, his wife and daughter. (USNA)**

Karl-Heine-Straße

Right: **American soldiers taking souvenir snapshots on Leipzig's main square, the Marktplatz. The roofless building is the Altes Rathaus (Old City Hall). A prime example of 16th-century Renaissance architecture, and since 1909 housing the Museum of Leipzig History, it was hit and set on fire by the RAF raid of December 3/4, 1943 and suffered further damage in later raids. The monument on the left is the Siegerdenkmal, another memorial to the 1813 Battle of the Nations. Picture by Army photographer Private H. Gasiewicz. (USNA)** *Centre:* **Painstakingly rebuilt and restored in 1945-50, the Altes Rathaus has risen from the ashes. The Siegerdenkmal has been removed.**

inner city had ceased. Prisoners were being rounded up in great numbers. Captain MacDonald, just recovered from his night-time adventure with General Grolman, accepted the formal surrender of the complete garrison of the Nachrichten-Kaserne (signals barracks) on Danziger Strasse in Gohlis, capturing 60 men and a large quantity of arms. Company K of the 23rd Infantry captured 200 men at the Gendarmerie-Kaserne on Bahnhofstrasse in Wiederietzsch, just across the railway from Gohlis. Earlier, while it was still dark, a patrol of two officers and 21 men from Company M of the 272nd Infantry had gone to check out yet another barracks in northern Leipzig, the Flak-Kaserne on Torgauer Strasse. They killed the German guards, surprised the garrison, overcame resistance at the barracks Kommandantur, and came away with 187 prisoners. The number of POWs taken by the 272nd Infantry alone was 1,721, the total number for all units added up to some 5,000. One special prisoner, found at his headquarters by a patrol from the 269th Combat Engineers Battalion, was Generalmajor von Ziegesar, the Wehrmacht-Kommandant moved aside by the appointment of Oberst von Poncet. Brought to the 272nd command post, at 1100 he formally surrendered the city to the Americans.

Around noon, the 69th divisional commander, General Reinhardt, arrived at the city hall where Lieutenant Colonel Zweibel formally handed him the swastika flag which his men had pulled down from the building. Shortly after the American flag was raised over the city hall.

Left: **A prize catch on April 19 was Generalmajor Hans von Ziegesar, the Wehrmacht commander although he was no longer in actual command of any troops, having been superseded by Oberst Hans von Poncet on April 10. The general was found at his headquarters by men from Company C of the 269th Combat Engineers Battalion. They went to get their platoon commander, Lieutenant Ernie Burciaga, who then accepted Ziegesar's surrender and escorted him and his adjutant to the POW cage. When Burciaga informed the 272nd Infantry HQ about his catch, they immediately fetched the General and had him sign a formal surrender of Leipzig. Tech/5 Poinsett was present with his camera when the General was brought out after the ceremony. L-R: Colonel Walter Buie, commander of the 272nd Infantry; General von Ziegesar; 1st Lieutenant Garry Czerner, who served as interpreter during the ceremony; and Captain Joseph Lipsius, Regimental S-2 of the 272nd, holding the surrender paper and a cigar in his left hand. Von Ziegesar's adjutant can just be seen on the extreme right. Fifty-four years old but of weak health, Ziegesar would die in American captivity in 1946. We were unable to locate the building where the**

Left: **However, the signing of a formal surrender paper was a bit premature as Oberst von Poncet and his force of 300 were still fanatically fighting on at the Battle of the Nations Monument and in no way willing to give up. In the afternoon of the second day, April 19, the 1st Battalion of the 271st Infantry launched an attack on the monument but was thrown back. Private Gasiewicz pictured riflemen of Company C charging past the Von Schwarzenberg Memorial during the attack. (USNA)**

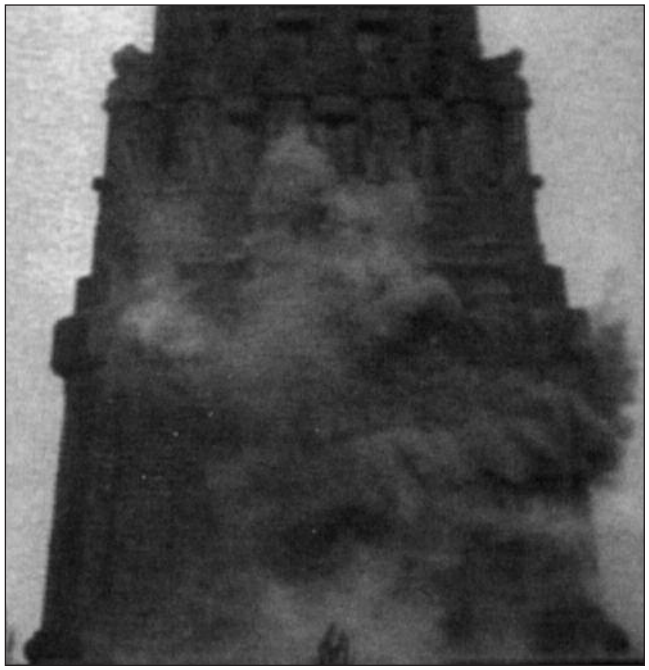
Right: **The memorial stone, located in a small park beside the Preussenstrasse (today Prager Strasse) some 300 yards south of the Battle of the Nations Monument, commemorates Austrian Prince Karl von Schwarzenberg, the overall commander of the armies united against Napoleon in the 1813 Battle of Leipzig. The park is known as the Monarchenhügel (Monarchs' Hill), as it was from here that the princely commanders directed the battle. (Niemann)**

LAST STAND AT THE BATTLE OF THE NATIONS MONUMENT

All resistance in Leipzig had now ceased, except for that at the Battle of the Nations Monument. Oberst von Poncet and his men were still inside, determined to hold on and make a last stand. By now he was holding 17 American prisoners inside the tower's catacombs. The Germans treated the prisoners with great consideration, fully aware that within a day or two their position would be reversed. While heavy artillery pounded the outside of the monument, the prisoners were fed, shown the priceless books stored in the crypt, and told the story of that earlier battle of Leipzig which the monument commemorated.

All through the morning, American artillery blasted away at the granite and concrete structure, but it was futile since most of the shells literally bounced off its walls. During the afternoon, the 1st Battalion of the 271st Infantry (attached to the 273rd) was ordered to assault the bastion, with Company C making the main effort, and Company B assisting from the left flank. Von Poncet's men reacted with a rain of fire from every window, porthole and crevice. Resistance was so heavy that the companies were forced to withdraw with heavy casualties.

More artillery was thrown at the tower. Few single targets in the war received so much artillery pounding, since six battalions were used, including several of heavy 155mm 'Long Tom' howitzers. One of the heavy shells blew a hole in the big window in the tower's south-east façade. Another shell went through the hole and exploded against the wall of the monument's inner dome. Still the enemy would not budge. Someone suggested to use flame-throwers against the target but General Reinhardt, knowing the Germans held American prisoners, forbade the employment of this weapon. It looked like it was going to be a long and costly siege.



Left: **The Battle of the Nations Monument under fire — captured on film by an American Army cameraman. All through April 19 American heavy artillery, including 155mm and 8-inch howitzers, pounded the monument at point-blank range — with preciously little effect as the shells just bounced of the thick granite walls. The only shells that had any noticeable effect was one that blasted a hole in the big window on the monument's south-east side and another one that flew through the hole and exploded inside. However, even that did little serious damage because it burst in the monument's upper room whereas the German garrison was down below in the monument's base.** *Right:* **A German defender lies dead in the monument park.**

Oberst Hans von Poncet, Combat Commander of Leipzig. Born at Gleiwitz in 1899, he had begun the war in Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 138, commanding a company in Poland in 1939 and a battalion in Norway in 1940. From 1943 he commanded Grenadier-Regiment 358 on the Eastern Front, where he won the Ritterkreuz in August 1944. Released by the Americans immediately after his capitulation, he emigrated to South Africa in 1951 but returned after a few years to settle at Murnau-Westried in Upper Bavaria. He died in November 1983.

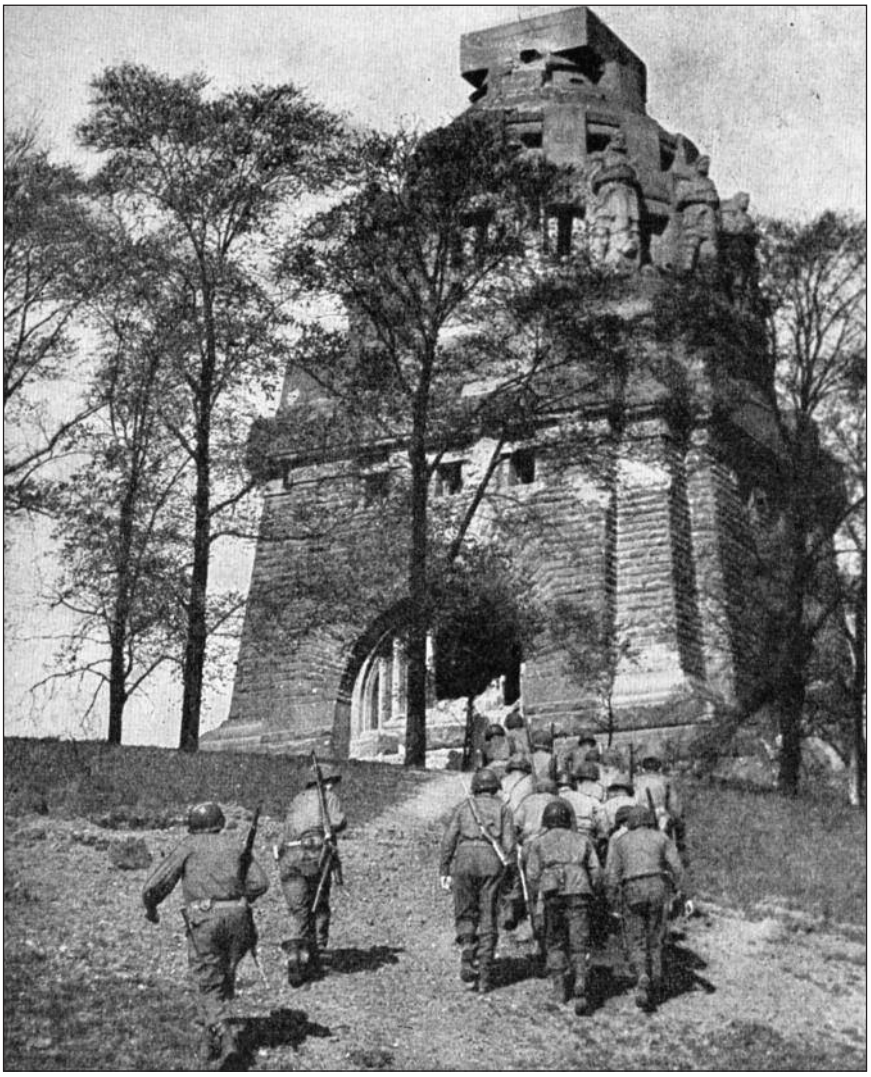
Then Captain Hans L. Trefousse, chief of the POW Interrogation Team of the 273rd, came up with an idea. Born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Trefousse had emigrated to the United States with his parents in 1936, but was still fluent in German. He told his regimental commander, Colonel Adams, that he thought he could 'talk' the German commanding officer into capitulating.

At 1500 hours Trefousse, together with Lieutenant Colonel George Knight, the 273rd Executive Officer, and a captured German carrying a white flag, walked up to the monument. As they started up the steps to the souvenir shop at the back of the building, Poncet and two of his officers came out to meet the parliamentaries. Trefousse explained to Poncet the futility of their stand, but the Oberst replied he had personal orders from the Führer never to surrender. He also refused to release or exchange the prisoners, but he agreed to a two-hour truce for the evacuation of wounded on both sides.

The truce began at 1800 hours. While American medics removed over a dozen casualties, Trefousse continued to argue with Poncet outside the souvenir shop until he persuaded him to continue the talks inside the monument. Also during the ceasefire, Generalmajor von Ziegesar, captured earlier in the day, went up into the monument to further explain to the defenders the senselessness of remaining. The Germans replied that they would only leave if they could be guaranteed safe conduct to their own lines. This was refused.

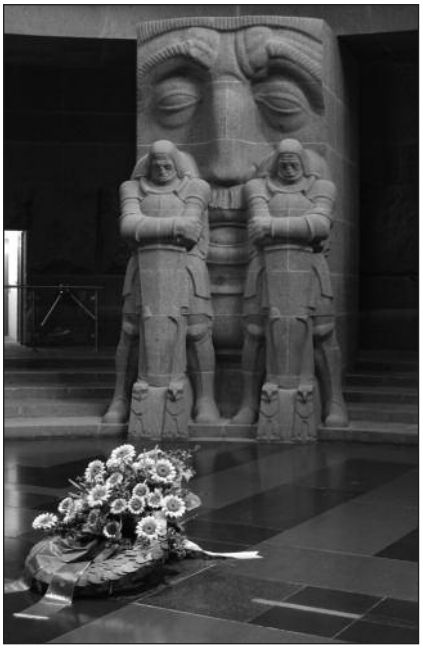
As the night wore on, and with Trefousse continuing negotiations inside the monument, Colonel Adams decided just to leave a guard around it and to abandon all attempts to seize it. He had received orders for his regiment to move to the east, so he expected to hand over the task of overcoming the stronghold to other units.

Shortly after midnight, division headquarters passed a new proposal to Trefousse: if Oberst von Poncet would come out of the

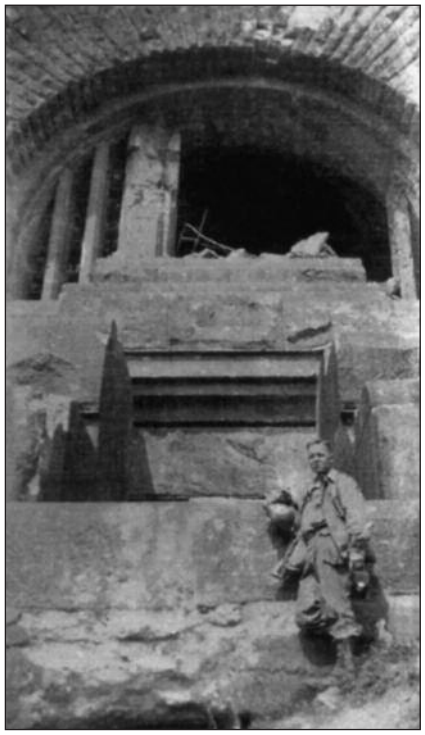


Unable to dislodge the Germans from their impregnable position, the Americans decided to attempt to talk the Germans into capitulation. A German-born captain went up to the monument under a white flag but it would take nine hours of persuasive talk before Oberst von Poncet finally agreed to come out and surrender his force shortly after midnight. Here a white flag flutters from the monument as US troops move in.

American soldiers survey the detritus inside the crypt of the monument.



The guardian knights stand unmoved by the passage of time.



After the battle, Charles Martens, a member of one of the 155mm battalions, had his snapshot taken at the battered eastern window of the monument.

Above: **Glad that the fighting around the monument is over, civilians crowd around a disabled Sherman of the 777th Tank Battalion on Preussenstrasse at its junction with Ludolf-Colditz-Strasse. This was the tank that was knocked out when Task Force Zweibel passed the monument on April 18. (Lee Miller Archives)**

monument alone and surrender, his men would be allowed to follow, one by one. By now Trefousse had been pleading with Poncet for nine hours. He understood the proposal to mean that only von Poncet would be taken prisoner but that his men would be free to go, and he explained it in this way to the Germans. At long last, acknowledging this as an honourable way out and a means to save further bloodshed, Poncet accepted and at 0200 walked out of the monument's main door and surrendered his force. The last German redoubt in Leipzig had fallen.

However, as Trefousse was about to release the rest of the garrison, Colonel Knight informed him there had been a misunderstanding. The proposal had been the other way round: General Reinhardt had given permission only to release Poncet but all the others were to be interned. Trefousse explained the new situation to the 15 or so German officers. In an attempt to persuade them to accept the new terms he said he would try to get them a 48-hour leave in Leipzig if they promised not to escape during it and to report back at the monument afterwards. Only one German insisted that the original proposal be kept and Trefousse, feeling he could not break his earlier word of honour, let him go. The others accepted the new conditions. Colonel Knight endorsed the 48-hour leave, colluding with Trefousse not to inform divisional headquarters. While some 275 German enlisted men were being disarmed and the 17 American prisoners freed, Trefousse smuggled the German officers out of the monument and to their homes. When he returned to collect them two days later, all were waiting except one and he had left a note of apology.

The Battle of Leipzig had ended.

Repaired after the war, the Völkerschlachtdenkmal was again undergoing restoration when we visited Leipzig.

GI's having chow on the main steps of the monument.

As the Americans conquered Leipzig they liberated thousands of forced workers and slave labourers who had been employed in the city's many war factories and been housed in buildings and camps in and around the city. One of the most horrific finds, discovered by men of the 272nd Infantry on the morning of April 20, was the slave labour camp at Thekla in north-eastern Leipzig. A satellite camp of Buchenwald, known as Thekla I or Lager 'Emil', it housed some 800 slave workers employed at the Erla aircraft factory at Abtnaundorf. All inmates except the sick and ill had been marched off to the east on April 13. Then on April 18, just as the Americans were entering the city — in an act reminiscent of the Gardelegen Massacre of five days earlier (see *After the Battle* No. 113) — the SS guards herded the remaining 300 sick and ill inmates into one of the camp huts and then set fire to it. Those men who broke down doors to escape were machine-gunned. The SS then abandoned the site, leaving the ground around the burned-down hut strewn with horribly charred corpses. In all some 100 inmates perished in this war crime. Tech/5 C. B. Sellers pictured shocked GI soldiers inspecting the scene on April 20. (USNA)

The section of the former concentration camp that was the site of the mass murder is today a nondescript road junction on Braunstrasse in Leipzig's modern Industrial Park North-East. We pinpointed the exact location by identifying the houses along the railway line in the background.

The memorial commemorating the massacre, erected in GDR times, stands on Theklaer Strasse, just west of Braunstrasse. It puts the number of dead at 80.

Above: **With the 2nd and 69th Divisions needed on the Mulde river further east, several artillery units of V Corps were sent into Leipzig to take over control of the city, their tasks being to restore order, stop the looting and plundering, and control the thousands of displaced persons. The half-track on the right in this picture by Tech/5 Crampton, taken in front of the main railway station, belongs to the 467th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion while the Dodge trucks on the left are from the 953rd Field Artillery Battalion. (USNA)** *Above right:* **Dodging the trams to get an accurate comparison of the Hauptbahnhof today.**

AFTERMATH

The 69th and 2nd Division troops did not stay in the city for very long. Just a few hours after Leipzig had fallen, the first contingents of both divisions were on their way to join the corps armour at the Mulde river, 13 miles east of the city, and await contact with the Soviet Red Army approaching from the east. Before the end of the day, all regiments of the 69th Division had cleared the city. Five days later, on April 25, the division's 273rd Infantry would gain the distinction of being the first unit to contact the Russians near Torgau (see *After the Battle* No. 88).

The 2nd Division's 23rd Infantry stayed in the city until the morning of the 21st, the GI's enjoying champagne from a captured warehouse and a night of joyful fraternisation with the local girls. Then they too left for the Mulde.

By then, a special control force formed from artillery battalions of the V Corps was already moving in to control the city. A Military Government detachment arrived, led by Major Richard Eaton, who became US Town Commander. His most difficult task proved having to deal with the Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland (National Committee of Free Germany), a Communist-orientated organisation, illegal under the Nazi regime, which had come out in the open during the final days. Against their wishes, on April 23 he appointed Dr Hans Vierling as the city's new Oberbürgermeister.

A GI inspecting bomb damage in the Hauptbahnhof. The US daylight raid of July 7, 1944 had hit the station very hard, destroying the main platform hall. (USNA)

By the time Signal Corpsman Private H. Gasiewicz pictured the station in April 1945 *(centre)***, the rail tracks had been cleared of rubble. He took his photo standing just outside the roofed part of the platforms, which produces a perfect comparison 60 years later** *(right)***.**

35

Right: **On May 1, Major General J. Lawton Collins, commander of the US VII Corps, received his Soviet opposite number, General Gleb Baklanov of the Soviet 34th Guards Corps, in Leipzig for an official visit to celebrate the link-up between the armies of East and West. Here Collins greets General Baklanov (centre) and Major-General Mikhail Sukhanov (right), commander of the Russian 118th Infantry Division, in front of his headquarters building on Dittrichring where he would offer the Russians luncheon. Picture by Army photographer Pfc Ray Hurley. In his autobiography *Lightning Joe*, published in 1979, Collins recalled: 'Baklanov was a handsome young man, I guess not over 35. He had risen from the ranks to corps commander, which proved his ability. He could speak no English or French, so we had to converse through a Russian interpreter, which probably accounted for his stodginess. But after a few drinks of straight gin, the nearest thing to vodka that we could offer the Russians, Baklanov relaxed and was more at ease. He and his people were appreciative of our friendliness and I am sure were anxious to reciprocate. He repeatedly said how glad he was to be in Leipzig and how he had scarcely believed it possible a week before.' (USNA)** *Centre:* **The Dresdner Bank building seen in the background is today the High School for Music and Theatre.**

On April 30, Leipzig became the responsibility of the US VII Corps. Its commander, Major General Collins, established his headquarters in the former Gestapo headquarters on Dittrichring. Collins had invited General Gleb Baklanov, commanding the Soviet 34th Guards Corps, to visit him there. The Russian general arrived on May 1 accompanied by Major-General Mikhail A. Sukhanov, commander of his 118th Infantry Division, and his staff and was treated to a luncheon with Collins' division commanders and principal staff officers.

On May 13, after the German capitulation, there was another meeting at Leipzig when Generals Hodges of the US First Army and Collins received Colonel-General Alexei Zhadov, commander of the Soviet Fifth Guards Army, and General Baklanov, and presented them and about 60 other Russians with decorations to commemorate the historic link-up between East and West.

Collins' Corps HQ was located in this building at No. 24 Dittrichring. During the Nazi regime it had been a headquarters of the Leipzig Gestapo and Sicherheitsdienst. In GDR times, from 1950 until 1989, it housed the local office of the Stasi secret service, being occupied by vigilant citizens shortly after the fall of the East German regime in order to safeguard vital Stasi records. Today it houses both the museum documenting the civil movement that toppled the Communist regime and the satellite office of the Federal Commissioner in Charge of Stasi Documents.

Twelve days later, on May 13, there was another American-Soviet ceremony in Leipzig when Collins and Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges of the US First Army decorated a group of 60 Soviet officers and enlisted men of the Fifth Guards Army. Here Hodges shakes hands with Colonel Tscherepanov after presenting him with the Legion of Merit. In return, the Russian delegation, led by Colonel-General Alexei Zhadov of the Fifth Guards Army, awarded an equal number of Americans with Soviet decorations. Picture by Army photographer Tech/4 Carolan. (USNA)

Following the Yalta agreement on Zones of Occupation, on July 1 the American forces in Leipzig packed up and vacated the city and all of Saxony, handing it over to the Soviets. Among the few American servicemen staying behind were the Army photographers who remained to record the Russian entry into the city. They did not have to wait long for the first Russian troops marched into Leipzig the following day, July 2. These foot soldiers were pictured by Pfc Hurley. (USNA)

Although their country had lost the war, the citizens of Leipzig were pleased that at least they had been conquered by the Americans and not by the feared Russians. At least, so they thought, they had escaped the wrath of the Red Army soldiers and the fate of living under a Bolshevist regime.

However, unknown to them, Leipzig lay in the Soviet Zone of Occupation as agreed on by the Big Three at the Yalta Conference. The arranged date for the hand-over of territory was July 1, but this had not been announced publicly. For two and half months the people of Leipzig lived under the illusion that they would form part of the Western world.

Then, on July 1 the American troops in western Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia suddenly packed up and left, evacuating the territory and leaving it to the Soviets. That same day the Red Army crossed the Elbe and Mulde and moved in to take over. The first Russian troops entered Leipzig on July 2, much to the shock and surprise of the local population. Generalmajor Nikolai I. Trufanov arrived as the new Town Commandant. Two weeks later, on July 16, the Soviets relieved Oberbürgermeister Vierling and appointed Dr Erich Zeigner in his place. For the next 44 years the people of Leipzig would live under a Communist regime.

After some effort we found the spot in the well-to-do villa quarters of Gohlis-Süd, just north-west of the inner city. The troops are marching from what was in 1945 Prendelstrasse (today Karl-Rothe-Strasse) into Döllnitzer Strasse (today Lumumba-Strasse).

Russian T-34 tanks rolling into Blücherplatz, the square adjoining the big open space in front of the Hauptbahnhof, on July 7, pictured by Tech/5 Yale J. Lapidus. The fire-blackened building on the left is the Astoria Hotel, destroyed in the RAF raid of December 3/4, 1943. (USNA)

The building has lost its decorative ornamentation and is no longer a luxury hotel. When we visited Leipzig it stood locked up, awaiting a new buyer. Blücherstrasse, which the tanks came rolling down, is today Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse and Blücherplatz is now part of Willy-Brandt-Platz.

Above: **Pfc Hurley also photographed this column of Soviet horse-drawn carts and wagons. (USNA)** *Below:* **The Line 15 to Probstheida signs on the streetcar gave Karel the clues to find the spot where this photograph had been taken: in Lützner Strasse in Neu-Lindenau, the main road leading into the city from the south-west, at its intersection with Saarfelder Strasse.**

Above: **Civilians watch seemingly emotionless as Red Army horse-drawn vehicles pass through Leipzig on July 3. The wartime caption to this picture by 2nd Lieutenant Jacob Harris would have us believe that the column is moving *into* Leipzig but in actual fact they are *leaving* the city on their way to occupy other parts of Saxony. Like they had done in all territory to be handed over to the Russians (for example at the underground V-weapons factories at Nordhausen — see *After the Battle* No. 101), before they left, the Americans removed anything of military or scientific value. During their ten-week tenure, they conducted a systematic investigation of the city's aircraft factories, armaments works and university laboratories, carrying off large quantities of scientific blueprints, specimens of experimental weapons, together with scientists, technicians and other experts. All this still left plenty for the Russians, who in their turn began a programme of wholesale economic retribution, dismantling both of Leipzig's electricity works and 35 larger factories. (USNA)** *Right:* **We are obliged to the friendly lady inhabitant of the third-floor apartment on the corner of Lützner Strasse and Radiusstrasse who allowed us to take this nice comparison.**

Left: **The same column pictured by Lieutenant Harris further down Lützner Strasse, almost on the edge of the built-up area. This time the caption accurately says that the horse-drawn vehicles are 'passing through Leipzig headed in a western occupation movement'. (USNA)** *Right:* **The bridge across the small stream on the outskirts remains to pinpoint the spot.**

SPINDLE COMMEMORATED

By Jean Paul Pallud

The idea of commemorating the clandestine Allied parachutists who jumped in the Alps during the war was first proposed by Major Jean-Louis Perquin, an ex-French Army paratrooper and still active as a member of the staff of the 27ème Brigade d'Infanterie de Montagne. Having been invited to jump from a veteran Dakota, *Fifi Kate*, in the Netherlands in September 2004, Jean-Louis had the idea of using this Dakota to stage a jump by parachutists wearing wartime uniforms as part of the commemorations in May 2005 marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the war.

The parachutists who had jumped in the Rhône-Alps during WWII were members of the British SOE, French BCRA and American OSS and approximately a hundred landed in the region between 1942 and 1944. Then in June, July and August 1944, Special Forces personnel came to liaise with and train the local Resistance forces. There were six inter-Allied Jedburgh teams, four American Operational Groups, one French company of the 3rd SAS Battalion and 30 French parachutists from the 1er Bataillon de Choc, about 150 men all told.

The French Airborne Forces Veterans Association ('Qui Ose Gagne') soon joined the project and Pierre Lachenal, its representative in Rhône-Alpes, started to lobby authorities and associations to obtain the necessary permissions and funding as it would cost some 20,000 euros (£15,000) to bring the Dakota down from Holland to the Alps.

At first it was suggested that the celebration should take place at Glières, an important centre of the Resistance in Haute-Savoie (see *After the Battle* No. 105), but Glières is already sufficiently well commemorated so it was finally decided to mount the drop to mark a largely forgotten operation, the jump of an SOE agent, Peter Churchill, on the Semnoz mountain near Annecy in April 1943. And to this end, our issue No. 121, detailing the story of Peter Churchill and his Spindle circuit, was instrumental in the choice and backing of this decision.

It was also decided to link it with another very important event which took place at Vassieux-en-Vercors. The Vercors, a rugged upland lying south-west of Grenoble, is where in July 1944 3,000 Resistance soldiers had assembled to receive supplies being dropped to them by 100 B-17s of the US Eighth Air Force (Operation 'Cadillac'). Fearing that they might come down to harass traffic along the vital Rhône valley, the Germans committed strong forces, including an airborne battle group, from July 21 to eradicate the Resistance army based on the mountain. In this they succeeded, killing over 600, and ruthlessly dynamiting houses and executing 200 civilians.

The celebration at Vassieux in 2005 was to be centred on the award of the Knighthood of the Légion d'Honneur to Delmar Calvert, an American veteran of Operational Group 'Justine' who had jumped at Vassieux in June 1944. Bernard Colliat, manager of the Resistance museum at Vassieux (and author of the book *Vercors 1944, des G.I. dans le maquis*) was responsible for this part of the ceremony.

Official support was received both locally and nationally. The local Member of Parliament, Bernard Accoyer; Senators Pierre

Top: **At Meythet airfield near Annecy in south-eastern France, a stick of French veteran parachutists prepare to board *Fifi Kate*, the Dakota owned by Tony Holden (in the left background).** *Above:* **Just after 10 o'clock on May 7, 2005, the seven paratroopers of the first stick emerged for the historic descent onto the wartime drop zone on the Semnoz mountain.**

Left: **Beautiful mid-air shot taken by Patrick Goy, number seven in the second stick, showing the first six parachutists falling towards the exact spot where Peter Churchill landed in 1943. Then the Halifax flew across the mountain from left to right. Annecy and its lake in the background.** *Right:* **Hervé Steiner wore a US paratroopers' outfit with a French armband.**

Hérisson and Jean-Claude Carle, and Françoise Camusso, the Vice-présidente of the Conseil Général, approached the Minister of Defence, Michèle Alliot-Marie, who gave her full support to the project. Serge Dassault, the President of Dassault Aviation, stepped in with a financial donation to enable the project to become a reality, and the mayors of the local communes became enthusiastically involved.

Thanks to all efforts, the plan was finalised. The first jump was to take place on the Semnoz mountain on May 7 followed by another the following day at Vassieux. For the two days, the Dakota was to remain based at Meythet airfield near Annecy, just a few minutes flying time from the Semnoz and less than an hour from Vassieux.

Of the parachutists that assembled at Annecy, half were members of the UK Pathfinder Parachute Group and the rest from the French Airborne Forces Veterans Association. The Pathfinders were trained to carry out such commemorative jumps, having performed in 2004 for the celebrations in Normandy and at Arnhem, although now they were landing on the top of a mountain, with the risk of steep and rocky slopes and large fir trees.

The French and most of the Pathfinders were dressed in either British or American wartime paratrooper uniforms, and all were to use hemispherical WWII-type parachutes. These were provided by Survival Equipment Services Ltd: the PX1 Mk IV for the main, and PR7 for the reserve 'chute.

The Dakota arrived at Meythet on the afternoon of May 6 — D minus 1. Carrying aircraft registration N47FK and painted in WWII RAF markings complete with invasion stripes, she was piloted by Dutchman Peter Kuypers.

The evening was spent in briefing everyone — aircrew, air traffic control, the parachutists and the reception party on the DZ. The drop was to be made on a north-south flight along the top of the mountain, a safer course than the one flown in 1943 by the Halifax which dropped Peter Churchill. Also the drop zone was centred on the rounded top of the mountain, about half a kilometre south from that used in 1943, but to keep as close as possible to the original descent, they were to jump from 850 feet.

The local press had been very active in publicising the event and quite a large audience had already assembled on top of the Semnoz by the time that the band of the 27ème BCA struck up at 9.30 a.m. It was a surreal experience to hear the music surrounded by strange scenery in the fog of the bare and cold mountaintop.

Although the weather forecast was not ideal, *Fifi Kate* took off about 9.45 a.m. By then clouds were drifting slowly from the west across the Semnoz. About 10 a.m. the Dakota made a first pass northwards, some distance to the east of the mountain, only to see that it was by then shrouded in clouds. There were discussions on the radio whether or not to cancel the drop but then the clouds suddenly drifted eastwards, leaving the mountain clear. The pilot made another pass to check for the wind before the first man, Pierre Lachenal, jumped. His role was to check for the drift and he touched ground not far from the planned landing spot whereupon he lit a smoke flare.

On the next run seven paratroopers emerged, all landing within a few hundred metres of the smoke signal. Then on the final pass the eight paratroopers of the last stick jumped and landed successfully on the summit. Before departing the Dakota carried out another low pass a few hundred metres west of the crest, at the same level as the audience, followed by a Piper Cub painted in American WWII colours.

It had been intended to erect the memorial right by the field in which Peter Churchill had landed but because snow and mud can still be present in May, it had been decided not to attempt to inaugurate the memorial at that spot. Instead, the plaque had been mounted on a huge rock and the ceremony was held at a more accessible and convenient location where spectators could park, the plan being to move the rock and plaque to the correct point on the summit sometime in the summer.

Above: **A platoon of Chasseurs Alpins from the 27ème BCA provides the honour guard as their band strikes up the *Star Spangled Banner, God Save the Queen,* and the *Marseillaise*. The plaque was then inaugurated by Colin Bright, British Consul at Lyon (pictured *right* with his daughter), and Georges Buchet, a veteran of the real story in 1943 (see issue 121).**

From the Editor . . .

We have often said in the past that with our 'then and now' theme, sometimes no sooner is the film out of the camera, than the location has changed, but no photograph could have been more fortuitously taken than Jean Paul Pallud's cover shot for issue 126. The wreck of the German destroyer *Georg Thiele* had lain in Rombaks fjord for over 60 years before 'JP' pictured it in 2004 but a few months later the rusting relic of the Narvik campaign disintegrated.

As long-standing readers of the magazine will know, Jean Paul's dedicated research has been responsible for some remarkable discoveries over the years and his latest hobby-horse is to correct a popular misconception over the relative clock times in Britain and Germany during the war.

During the battle of France in May and June 1940, France and Great Britain had the same timing, GMT+1, but Germany was one hour ahead (GMT+2). Britain was to remain one hour behind Germany until the spring of 1941 when an additional hour was added for the summer (Double British Summer Time (DBST), i.e. GMT+2) so that the two countries were on the same time until Britain returned to GMT+1 on August 10 and was once again one hour behind Germany. This carried on until April 5, 1942, when Britain returned to DBST.

From then on, but for odd periods during the spring and autumn when the clocks changed, British and German time was the same. These periods could be as short as a few days (six days in the spring of 1943) but were generally longer, particularly in the autumn when they averagely lasted nearly two months.

Hence the major battles of 1944 and 1945 in Europe were mainly fought with both sides having the same time. Among those who erred was Gordon A. Harrison, the author of the American official history *Cross Channel Attack*. In the mistaken belief that the Germans were on Central European Time (GMT+1) in June 1944, he wrongly added one hour to all German timing to be able to quote them in Double British Summer Time (GMT+2). 'All times given in text are DBST' as he put in a footnote on page 275. This time inconsistency has led to many errors and/or ambiguity when analysing German decisions, for example by quoting an event at 10 a.m. when it was genuinely one hour earlier.

UNITED KINGDOM

In 1939 the time standard in Great Britain was Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and there was no difference between summer and winter. Then on February 25, 1940 one hour was added to GMT for the duration of the war, which remained in force until October 7, 1945. From 1941, an additional hour was added for the summer time, being called Double British Summer Time (DBST, i.e. GMT+2). Hence clocks in UK were advanced two hours with respect to GMT from May 4 to August 10, 1941; April 5 to August 9, 1942; April 4 to August 15, 1943; April 2 to September 17, 1944, and from April 2 to July 15, 1945.

GERMANY

Germany in 1939 was working with Central European Time (CET) — GMT+1 hour — and there was no summer time. On April 1, 1940 one hour was added to CET, this time being referred to as Central European Summer Time (CEST, i.e. GMT+2).

Germany remained on CEST throughout 1940 and 1941 and only returned to Central European Time on November 1, 1942. In March 1943, Germany returned to CEST for the summer only and clocks were advanced two hours with respect to GMT from March 29 to October 4, 1943; April 3 to October 2, 1944, and April 2 to September 15, 1945.

The *Georg Thiele* pointing her bow to the sky in the remote wilderness of Rombaks fjord provided an ideal cover shot for Jean Paul's Narvik issue 122. She finally broke up on January 5 or 6, 2005. We asked Ketil Singstad to take us another picture of the wreck but on his first trip in a kayak in rough conditions, his friend Frode Johansen fell overboard with his camera. We are indebted to Ketil for his endeavours as he returned in March with a more seaworthy motor boat to take these pictures for us.

FRANCE

In France in 1939 the time standard was GMT in the winter with one hour being added for the summer from April 15 to November 18, 1939. On February 25, 1940, one hour was added, a situation that was to last for the duration of the war (GMT+1). Then, on June 15, an additional hour was added, giving a summer time (heure d'été) at GMT+2 which was to end on October 5.

From 1940 to 1942, the situation in France was somewhat confused, with one time in Occupied France and another in the Zone Libre (the southern one-third of the country). The occupied zone had to adopt German time, i.e. Central European Summer Time from whichever day the Germans arrived in May or June 1940, until November 1, 1942, when the Germans returned to Central European Time.

In the Zone Libre, the winter time (heure d'hiver) was GMT+1 and the summer time GMT+2. Clocks were advanced two hours with respect to GMT from March 29 to October 5, 1941 and March 8 to November 1, 1942. After the entry into the Zone Libre by the Germans in November 1942, there was only one standard time in occupied France — that of the Germans — and from then on clocks were advanced two hours with respect to GMT from March 29 to October 4, 1943; April 3 to October 2, 1944, and from April 2 to September 15, 1945,

Publication of issue 125 describing the last flight of Douglas Bader brought a mixed reaction. A member of his ground crew, who wishes not to be named, told us how pleased he was that the truth had come out at last. Many other readers phoned to congratulate Andy Saunders for researching what has remained a mystery for over 60 years, and solving something that even the Germans could not get to the bottom of in August 1941. On the other hand we were roundly criticised by several of Bader's contemporaries for publishing the story so soon after Buck Casson's death (it was eight months), our critics at the same time completely rejecting the evidence presented by the discovery of Unteroffizier Schlager's aircraft with tail intact.

We have covered many friendly fire incidents in *After the Battle* — indeed the very first casualty of RAF Fighter Command was caused by misidentification of a flight of Hurricanes by a Spitfire squadron on September 6, 1939. (See *The Blitz Then and Now, Volume 1*.) Acting in the heat of battle, mistakes will always happen but it has been an anathema in some circles that Britain's most famous fighter pilot should have had his war career cut short in such a way. Perhaps another example of airbrushing history.

Where we did go wrong is in our implication that Bader and Casson had never met after the war, and we are very grateful to Anthony Stanford-Tuck for pointing this out. Our sincere apologies to Mrs Casson are due on this score.

In issue 119 Jean Paul illustrated the liberation of Beauvais through several of the pictures taken by Fernand Watteeuw. Living in the city throughout the war, he took pictures day after day covering the German bombing of 1940 that ruined the centre of the city; the life that resumed after the defeat; German aircraft taking off and landing on the near Tillé airfield; the bombing of the aerodrome and much more. He also took the risk of photographing German soldiers and their equipment. To achieve this he hid his camera — a Bessa Voigtlander 6×9 — in a pannier attached to the handlebars of his bicycle *(left)*. **With this equipment, he could stop his bicycle close to any German subject, men or vehicles, turn the handlebar to target the camera, and take a picture** *(right)*. **It was a risky enterprise but Watteeuw managed to get away with it. In the days just before the liberation, he took scores of shots of the withdrawing German convoys, with all sorts of vehicles and tanks, among which were some of the latest Jagdpanthers and Tiger IIs. Then, when the Guards Armoured Division liberated Beauvais, he shot more pictures, but this time not in secret! Fernand Watteeuw died in 2003 but his book, *Beauvais, une ville française sous l'occupation allemande*, with 266 pages and over 500 pictures, was reprinted in 2004 by the publishers GEMOB. Also available from GEMOB is *La libération de l'Oise en 1944*, 120 pages, over 300 pictures. (GEMOB, Chemin de Plouy, La Mie-du-Roy, 60000 Beauvais, website: *http://gemob.free.fr*).**

John Freeborn: 'To this day I continue to feel guilt over the needless death of Hulton-Harrop, I blame myself, as I passed around a pilots' order book forbidding us to open fire on single-engine aircraft, as they didn't have the range to reach Britain from their airfields in Germany. I felt that I had let my aggressive training and the hypertension at the time get the better of me. However, I shall maintain to my dying day that I followed Malan's order to attack.'

Fortunately the friendly fire incident which brought down Douglas Bader did not cost him his life, but Pilot Officer Montague Hulton-Harrop of No. 56 Squadron based at North Weald paid the ultimate price on September 6, 1939 from the guns of No. 74 'Tiger' Squadron based at Hornchurch. John Freeborn was court-martialled along with his Red Section leader, Paddy Byrne, but both were acquitted even though the squadron commanding officer 'Sailor' Malan, who had led them into the attack, appeared for the prosecution, denying that he had done so and claiming instead that he had ordered Freeborn and Byrne to break off the attack! John Freeborn went on to fly more operational hours in the Battle of Britain than any other pilot and was credited with 13½ enemy aircraft shot down, his biography *A Tiger's Tale* by Bob Cossey being published in 2002. But it was not until September 20 the following year that he visited North Weald for the very first time. He said that he didn't think he would be welcome. After touring the airfield museum, his host, Bill Aitken, asked if he would like to visit St Andrew's Churchyard where Hulton-Harrap lies buried. To this he readily agreed and Elaine Aitken was on hand to take this memorable photograph.

In May 2004, British television attempted to broadcast live a dig on probably the most famous Hurricane to fall in the Battle of Britain. After colliding with a Dornier over central London on September 15, 1940, Ray Holmes' machine smashed into Buckingham Palace Road where the wreckage has remained buried for over 60 years. *Left:* **After carefully pinpointing the spot — as there could be no second chance — the road was dug up and remains of the engine found buried beneath a water main.** *Right:* **In January 2005 Ray was awarded the civil honour by his home town of being granted the Freedom of the Borough of Wirral.**

Another aviation legend died on June 27, 2005 — Ray Holmes — whose claim to fame was to ram the Dornier which then crashed in the forecourt of Victoria Station in London on September 15, 1940. (See *The Battle of Britain Then and Now*, page 644.) Sergeant Holmes of No. 504 Squadron lost his wing in the process and was forced to bale out, landing safely in Hugh Street, Pimlico. His Hurricane crashed nearby in Buckingham Palace Road, and the existence of the wreckage of a Battle of Britain aircraft in the centre of London has been a constant lure for aviation archaeologists over the years. However the cost of closing and excavating a main road always ruled it out . . . that is until the Mentorn production company decided to fund the investigation as a piece of live television for Channel 5. Christopher Bennett and Steve Vizard, a veteran of dozens of aircraft digs, were brought in to mastermind the operation which took place over the weekend of May 29-30, 2004.

Careful pre-planning using all the known photos of the crash and computer triangulation pinpointed the position of the wreckage which now lay beneath a water main and other services. Ray Holmes was on hand to see the results, and handle pieces of wreckage although when he was shown them by the female interviewer, he showed much more interest in her!

By contrast another pilot who brought down a German aircraft in the battle by colliding with it has received scant recognition. Sergeant Bruce Hancock was on a solo training flight in an Anson on August 18, 1940 when a Heinkel from 5/KG27 attacked Windrush aerodrome. With no armament to bring to bear, Sergeant Hancock rammed the German aircraft which crashed on Blackbitch Farm at Aldsworth, killing the entire crew along with himself.

Had he been flying an aircraft on the strength of one of the 71 squadrons deemed by the Air Ministry to have served under Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain, then he would undoubtedly have been elevated as one of the battle's heroes; as it is, his bravery is simply remembered by a plaque in Windrush church.

The lighthouse keeper on the island of Lundy was the first on the scene when a Heinkel made a forced landing in March 1941. Stan and Joan Rendell tell the full story in *Lundy by Air* of how the keeper took the sidearms from the crew before he realised that they were German. Before he could return with help, they had set fire to their aircraft. (A revised version of the book is due out in 2006.)

Paul Cole of Brighton wrote to us in May 2004 pointing out that we had not included photographs of the wreckage still remaining from two German crashes on the island of Lundy which lies off the northern coast of Cornwall. Three aircraft came to grief on the island during the war — a Whitley and two Heinkels. The first German made a forced landing on March 3, 1941 after being hit by AA fire over the Irish Sea. The aircraft was more or less intact but was fired by the crew before they were captured. A month later another Heinkel from the same unit, 3/KG27, flew headlong into the cliffs but — unbelievably — two crewmen survived. (See *The Blitz Then and Now*, Volume 2, pages 453 and 506.)

Paul Cole visited the crash site which lies on moorland a hundred yards north of the Quarter Wall.

Maurice Hellier (far left) was responsible for initiating a memorial plaque to three schoolchildren, Barbara Arkell aged 15, George Button, 12 and Kenneth Carter, 11, who were killed on the spot in Egham High Street on November 15, 1940.

So often the initiative to remember the sacrifices of the war years is left to well-minded individuals, rather than the official bodies which should have led the way. Ross Bastiaan's successful project to record the Australian contribution by erecting bronze tablets around the world immediately comes to mind (see issue 85), and nearer to home Marianne Frederick's organisation Civilians Remembered (see issue 96) continues to strive — against the tide it seems — to achieve their memorial in Wapping.

Maurice Hellier took up the challenge to remember the deaths of three local school children, one of whom was a friend of his sister. They had been killed by a bomb outside No. 63 High Street in Egham, Surrey, yet his proposal to have a plaque erected at the site took three years to bring to fruition.

And Robin Brooks put forward the idea of restoring the outdoor chapel at the Scout Headquarters at Tovil.

It was here that Wing Commander Guy Gibson renewed his Rover Scout vow on June 11, 1943.

Down in Kent Robin Brooks with Gordon Newton was the instigator of another local memorial, this time remembering the lives laid down by six Rover Scouts, one of whom was Wing Commander Guy Gibson. He had renewed his Rover Scout oath at the Scout Headquarters at nearby Tovil and, after he was killed, the scouts lit candles for him and his navigator every night until the end of the war. However by 1973 the scouts' open-air chapel had become very overgrown and neglected. Robin felt he had to do something to amend the situation and so arranged a refurbishment and re-dedication ceremony in September 2004.

Terry Eckert E-mailed us from Las Vegas: 'Your Flensburg *After the Battle* was the best issue in years! I rented a BMW motorcycle in Hamburg and rode up to that area to visit the Marine-Schule in Flensburg-Mürwik where I was shown around and taken to the exact spot where Wolfgang Lüth was shot (see page 19 of issue 128), where there is this large engraved stone memorial.'

Robin also sent us photos of a dedication service he attended on Sunday, April 12, 2004 at Berinsfield burial ground in Oxfordshire to unveil a memorial stone in memory of Wing Commander Adrian Warburton, DSO and Bar, DFC and Two Bars, DFC (American). In issue 121 Robin told the story of Warburton's final flight which began from the nearby airfield of Mount Farm. With a ceremony conducted by the Reverend Dr Sandra Millar, Vicar of Berinsfield, and Squadron Leader Dunstan-Meadows, the padre of RAF Benson, a brass plaque mounted on a granite rock was unveiled by Mrs Eileen (Betty) Westcott, the widow of Adrian Warburton. The inscription on the plaque reads:

'In memory of Wg Cdr Adrian Warburton, who, as an RAF Officer attached to the 7th PR Group, 325th Reconnaissance Wing, 8th USAAF, took off from this airfield, Station 234 Mount Farm, on the morning of 12th April 1944 flying a Lockheed Lightning F5B on a photographic mission to Schweinfurt, Germany. Wg Cdr Warburton was lost to enemy action later that day and crashed near the village of Egling-an-der-Paar in Bavaria. The memorial was erected as a joint venture between Berinsfield Parish Council and the Ridgeway Military and Aviation Research Group'.

At the same time as the Berinsfield dedication was being conducted, a similar service for Warburton was being held at Egling-an-der-Paar in Bavaria. This was intended to be a service of reconciliation because the Bishop of Regensburg, Manfred Müller, is sure that it was his flak unit that shot the pilot down.

Mrs Eileen Westcott at the dedication of the memorial at Berinsfield to her husband Wing Commander Adrian Warburton whose final flight left from the nearby airfield of Mount Farm.

Christina Ratcliffe's liaison with Adrian Warburton *(left)* **has now achieved lasting fame, thanks to Frederick R. Galea including her unpublished manuscript about her own story in his book *Carve Malta on My Heart*.** *Centre:* **She lived — and died — in the top flat (arrowed) in this block on Vilhena Terrace which was bombed on April 23, 1942.** *Right:* **Her flat was undamaged; Bob Garner pictured it in April 2005.**

When we put the article together in issue 121 on Warburton's final flight, your editorial team must have had a mental block for it was not until Bob Garner wrote to us from Shrewsbury, Shropshire, that the penny dropped: that the Christina we featured in our Malta issue 10 was one and the same as Warburton's lover!

Bob wrote that 'during my visit to Malta I met several people who had known Christina and from their information I was able to locate where she had lived from 1942 until her death in 1988. She occupied the corner top floor flat at No. 7 Vilhena Terrace, Floriana, Valletta, a five-minute walk from Lascaris War HQ where she worked as a plotter after leaving the Whizz Bangs concert party, and just a stone's throw away from the ERA Social Club which is where she first met Warby. This was a pre-war navy club frequented by the RAF for relaxation, having a band and bar. The outside of the former ERA club is unchanged and is now occupied by the Italian Embassy.

'Christina is remembered as a lady who kept up her outward appearance but she became an alcoholic in her later years, living alone and returning from the local bars intoxicated and it must have been an effort to negotiate the 80 odd stairs to her flat. Living conditions inside were far from ideal as it was in a state of neglect and she was without electricity at some stage, but she did not appear to her neighbours as being penniless. Her end was even more sad as I was told that it was three months before her body was discovered in the flat.'

Mark Brewer wrote from Hove in Sussex to tell us of an interesting discovery he had made in woodland near Mayfield in Kent. He had been led to the site by one of the forestry workers, Dave Martin, who told him that he first saw a doodlebug flying bomb on June 12, 1944. 'It was quite early in the morning, between 8 and 9 a.m.', Dave explained. 'I was ten years old at the time, my two brothers a little younger. We lived at Chessons Farm between Wadhurst and Ticehurst. We were in the process of dressing when we heard a very loud droning noise, everything in the room seemed to vibrate and it was certainly something we had never heard before. Rushing to the bedroom window we were expecting heavy machinery to be coming down the drive — I don't know what as there was very little machinery about in those days — and we had cart horses working on the farm.

'We soon realised the noise was coming from the sky not the ground. Looking up we caught a glimpse of a weird looking aircraft, which seemed to be alight. I say a glimpse because there was a stiff breeze from the north-east with broken low cloud and only patches of clear sky. I think we saw more of that one than the dozens that followed over the coming weeks, mainly because our parents drummed it into us that as soon as we heard one we should get below ground level, which sometimes meant jumping into the nearest ditch!

'The one good thing was that all the time you could hear the engine roaring you were safe, as soon as it stopped you had to watch out, we would lay there hoping it would carry on, at least a field or two away. You never walked across fields, you kept to the hedgerows where there was normally a well maintained ditch to jump into.'

And taking Mark into the wood, Dave pointed out the bullet-holed tail pipe still lying where it had fallen some 60 years previously!

And V1 relics of a different sort were the subject of a letter to us from a completely different part of the world. Mike Jamison of Riverton, Wyoming, wrote to say that he had explored the lesser-known parts of Wendover airfield which had hosted the 509th Atomic Bomb Group (see issue 41). Located near the Bonneville Salt Flats in Nevada, Wendover was used after the war by the Americans for testing V1s and the US version known as the JB-2 which flew from there during the late 1940s and early '50s.

V1 relics: in the depths of a wood in Kent *(left)* **and out on the desert near Wendover airfield in Nevada** *(right)*.

The entrance to Whaddon Hall reproduced from Geoffrey Pidgeon's book *The Secret Wireless War*.

***Bertie's War* features Captain Ted North with Bertie on Mike Sector of Juno Beach.**

While we do not carry formal book reviews in *After the Battle*, we do like to keep readers informed about publications which are relevant to subjects we have covered in the magazine. Geoffrey Pidgeon's book *The Secret Wireless War* is directly relevant to two issues: Ultra in issue 37 and Black Propaganda in issue 75.

The book tells of the formation of the communications division of SIS formed in 1938 by Brigadier Richard Gambier-Parry, the head of MI6 Section VIII. It includes diary entries by one of the 'founding fathers' recording the secret meetings that took place, and the assembly of its talented staff. It reports on the early days of the original SIS wireless 'Station X' based in Barnes in south-west London, and the building of its second station in a bungalow in Surrey with the strange name of 'Funny Neuk' — which turned out to be owned by Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair — 'C' — Chief of Secret Intelligence Services.

The unit's wireless station at Bletchley Park is described and its replacement by the stations at nearby Whaddon Hall which then became the wartime headquarters of Section VIII.

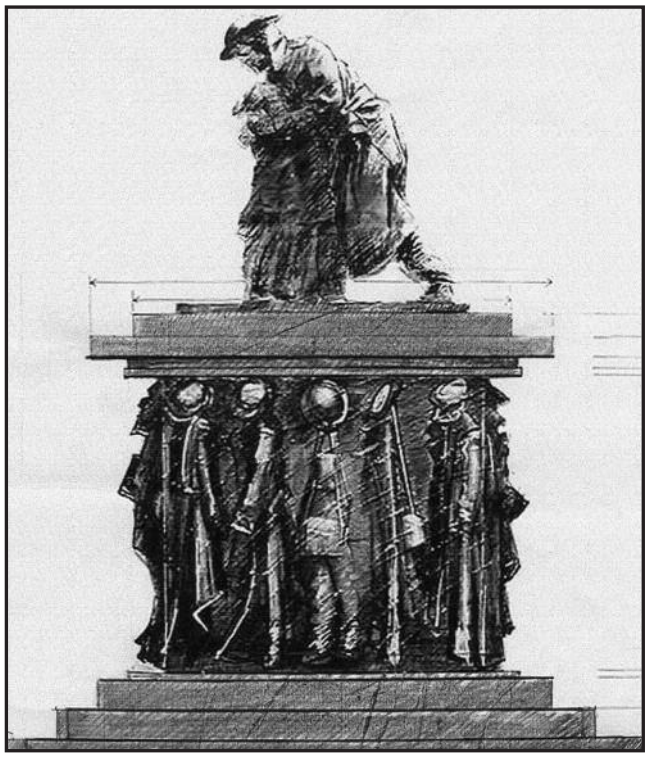
Personal tales by those who were part of this most secret of units abound in the book and it is an important record of people and events that — it is no exaggeration to say — helped to win the war. (ISBN: 1-84375-252-2 published by UPSO Ltd, 5 Stirling Road, Castleham Business Park, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 9NW).

Chris Ransted has done a most remarkable piece of research into wartime bomb disposal casualties. These unsung heroes, working under difficult conditions, far from the front lines to protect life and property, knowing that one false move could be their last, performed deeds requiring courage of the highest order. (See Commander Woolley's diary extract reproduced in issue 127.) The book *Bomb Disposal* is available direct from Chris Ransted, 49 Vale Road, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7EA. Price £7.95 plus UK post £1.55 or £3.55 postage for the rest of the world.

And something very different is *Bertie's War*, a little book privately published by Derek North. Before the war Derek's father Ted was a conjurer with the Magic Circle and also a ventriloquist. As a captain serving with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, in June 1944 he took his dummy Bertie, which he had made in 1935, to Normandy and photographed him against the backdrop of the beach defences. Ted died in 1986 aged 85 and Bertie is now on display at the D-Day Museum at Southsea from where *Bertie's War* (ISBN: 0 9551285 0 1) is available. The book can also be obtained direct from Derek North at 38 Brooklyn Avenue, Loughton, Essex, IG10 1BL. Price £4.99 plus postage.

While it is heartening to see that major memorials are still — albeit belatedly — being set up, at the same time it is very sad because so many of the men and women they honour are no longer with us. We have covered a number of important new memorials in recent issues, three of the very latest to be unveiled in London for this 60th anniversary year being to commemmorate the Women of World War Two, the Battle of Britain, and animals

'The United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand all have national memorials to their women but not Britain', explains Major David Robertson, the driving force behind their memorial unveiled by HM The Queen in Whitehall on July 10, 2005. 'This country mobilised some 750,000 women for the Services but once you include the Land Army and those working in the factories, the figure for those involved in the war effort is ten times that!'



First conceived back in 2000 as a joint creation by John Mills and Anthony Stones *(left)*, the Westminster City Council finally approved John's modified design for the Monument to the Women of World War II. Initially Trafalgar Square was put forward for its location but a much more imposing site was eventually chosen in Whitehall, close to where King Charles I was executed on a scaffold in 1649 *(right)*. In order not to overshadow the nearby Cenotaph, its height was limited to 23 feet.

The National Memorial to the Battle of Britain on the site of Wanstone heavy gun battery at Capel-le-Ferne, as seen from the bomb aimer's position on the RAF's preserved Lancaster.

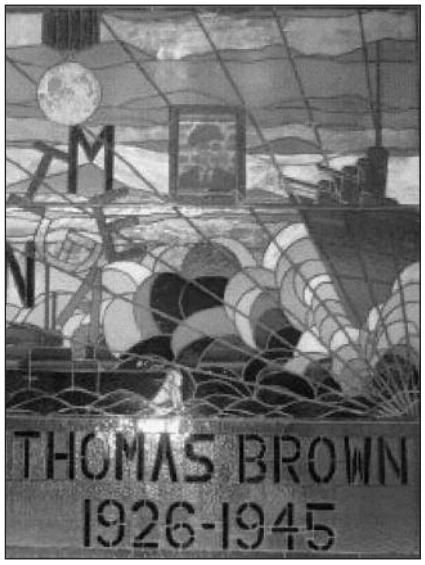
The first national memorial to the Battle of Britain, on the Kent coast near Folkestone, was the brainchild of Wing Commander Geoffrey Page who served with No. 56 Squadron during the battle. The location on the clifftop over which much of the Battle of Britain had taken place seemed a perfect location and a site was chosen on the former Wanstone battery (see issue 29) at Capel-le-Ferne. It was unveiled by HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother on July 9, 1993.

However, it was not long before a move was made by Bill Bond of the Battle of Britain Historical Society to promote the creation of another memorial to 'The Few' in London, the idea being that it would include the names of all those who were deemed to have fought in the battle on bronze panels. *Associated Newspapers* launched the appeal and the Westminster City Council provided a perfect site on Victoria Embankment, quite close to the existing Air Force Memorial. After a long gestation period, Paul Day's design was selected, the memorial being unveiled on Sunday, September 18, 2005.

The magnificent Battle of Britain London Monument backing the Thames at Westminster was designed by Paul Day *(left)*. **It was unveiled by HRH The Prince of Wales on September 18, 2005 in the presence of some 80 veterans of the battle. A beautiful commemorative book has been produced titled *Honouring the Few* which not only tells the story of the battle but describes the building of the monument and includes stunning photography of Paul's masterpiece. Available from the Battle of Britain Historical Society, PO Box 174, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9FA. Price £11.99 inc. post. (ISBN: 0-9551351-0-9)**

In issue 74 we told the story of one of the many para dogs which was killed with his master in Normandy. Creatures great and small have always been used in wars but not until now was their dedication to man memorialised with the unveiling of the Animals at War Memorial in London's Park Lane. It has been estimated that more than eight million horses died in the First World War alone; carrier pigeons have been used as messengers; mules and elephants as beasts of burden, and even the lowly glow worm was employed in WWI for map reading in place of torches. All are depicted on the new memorial which was unveiled by HRH Princess Anne, the Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, on November 24, 2004.

The beautiful Animals at War Memorial, designed by sculptor David Backhouse with its poignant inscription: 'They had no choice', stands within a stones' throw of where the IRA detonated a car bomb in July 1982 which killed four soldiers of the Blues and Royals and seven horses.



More commemorations: from a window in northern England . . . to the blessing of regimental badges in Canada . . .

We are very grateful to W. Gordon Hornsby of North Shields to bring to our attention the installation of a memorial window in the Saville Exchange to the memory of Thomas Brown. The name may not be immediately familiar but in October 1942 he was a member of the three-man boarding party from HMS *Petard* which recovered code-books from the U-559 which proved vital in the efforts to crack the German cipher created on the Enigma machine (see issue 37). Able Seaman Colin Grazier and First Lieutenant Anthony Fasson were drowned in the attempt but Tommy, then a 16-year-old canteen assistant, made three trips between the two vessels to retrieve the vital documents which history has stated helped shorten the war. Sadly Thomas died in 1945 trying to save his sister from a house fire.

We were pleased to hear that the concrete regimental badges found in Kent (see issue 122) have reached their home in the new Fredrick Tilston VC Armouries in Windsor, Ontario, and were dedicated in October 2004.

Back in 1978 we inadvertently provided the basis for a memorial to General Sikorski who died taking off from Gibraltar (see issue 20). Readers of issue 24 will be aware that we mounted an operation to recover a propeller lying on the seabed near the crash position which, while successful, proved not to be of the type installed on Sikorski's machine. Nevertheless 'our' three-bladed prop was later set up as a memorial in Gibraltar — see issue 58, page 40. An additional plaque was added to it and unveiled on July 4, 2003 to mark the 60th anniversary of his death.

While on the subject of Gibraltar, Alan Baker E-mailed us in October 2004 to tell us about changes since we published issue 21 in 1977. 'The European Area of the RAF Association held its autumn conference in GIB last weekend. Our visit included an invitation to enter the Great North Road, as well as to explore public access parts of Gibraltar. Needless to say, I went there armed with my copy of Number 21. Alas it is now very outdated as not only is the border problem now history but urban development has made it difficult to identify even GIB/1977 shots! All the same, issue 21 was invaluable as the best guide to GIB's recent military history.

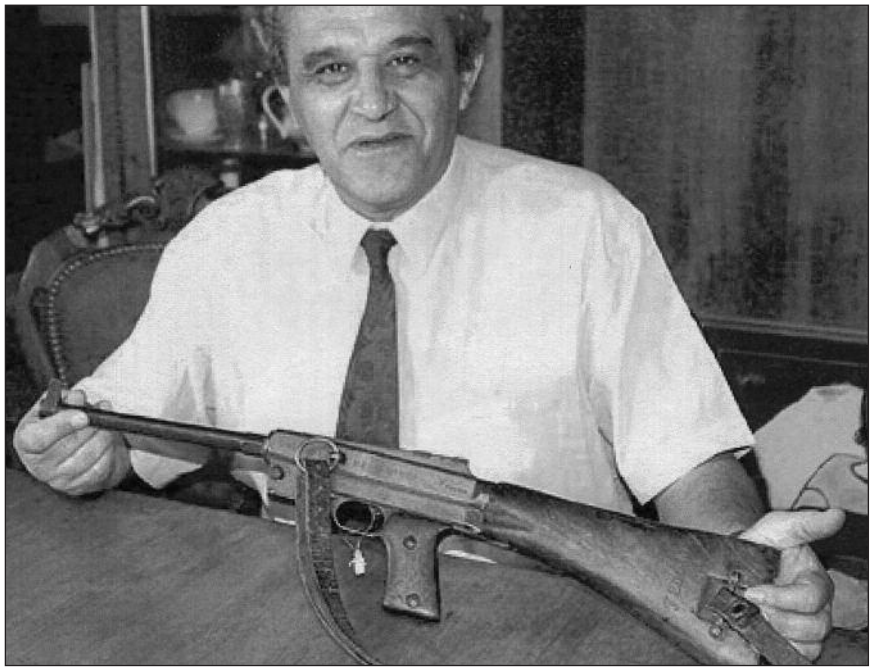
'A small local group of military historians runs, on request, walks along the Great North Road tunnel. It was horrendous to see the rusting power plant, kitchen, etc. No Government of Gibraltar department is apparently interested in saving what simply has to be a magnet for the swarm of day trippers to GIB. They've all scratched the apes and visited the 18th-century tunnels!

'RAF North Front retains its tower, two T2 hangars (one undergoing a re-clad) and other accommodation. There are no based aircraft and few military visitors. The Royal Navy have just about pulled out, releasing all their Europa Point accommodation blocks, etc, for desecration by local morons. Many more sophisticated radar domes now adorn the Upper Rock (still out of bounds) and share Europa Point with the lighthouse and a huge new mosque. The Gibraltar Regiment conducts all ceremonial and guard duties. Devil's Gap and other batteries remain, although time, neglect and vandalism have all done their best to make them eyesores. A charge is now levied for tourists to enter the 100-ton gun area. Gigantic housing developments and land reclamation result in even some casements now being well away from the sea.'

As we have explained many times in these pages, *After the Battle* can only portray places as a snapshot in time and many readers like to send us their own comparisons of *our* comparisons! Thus we were very pleased to receive David Graham's letter from Tasmania in December 2004 as he included photographs of the wreckage of the *Lady be Good* (issue 25) lying at Tobruk after its retrieval from the desert (issue 89).

. . . to 'our' propeller blade at Gibraltar. Many and varied are the memorials erected to fighting men.

The most unique memorial to lost airmen must be the wreckage of the *Lady be Good* lost in the desert for 15 years, the crew having succumbed in their desperate attempt to reach civilisation. David Graham pictured the remains at Tobruk.



Two Mussolini relics: the gun which is purported to have killed him and a fasces plaque from his office.

Sergio Andreanelli, our long-time Italian researcher, brought to our attention that the weapon used to kill Mussolini had finally surfaced in Tirana. During our research for the story in issue 7, which was published long before the fall of the Iron Curtain, we contacted the museum reputed to be holding the gun yet never received a reply but, in November 2004, on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Albania, it was put on public display.

After the general director of the state archives, Shaban Sinani, discovered a letter written in November 1957 by Walter Audisio (believed to be the triggerman), confirming the authenticity of the weapon, the director of the National History Museum, Moikom Zeequo, produced it for the press. It appears that the 7.65mm MAS was removed from Italy by an Albanian partisan, Xhavit Qesja, who took part in the killing.

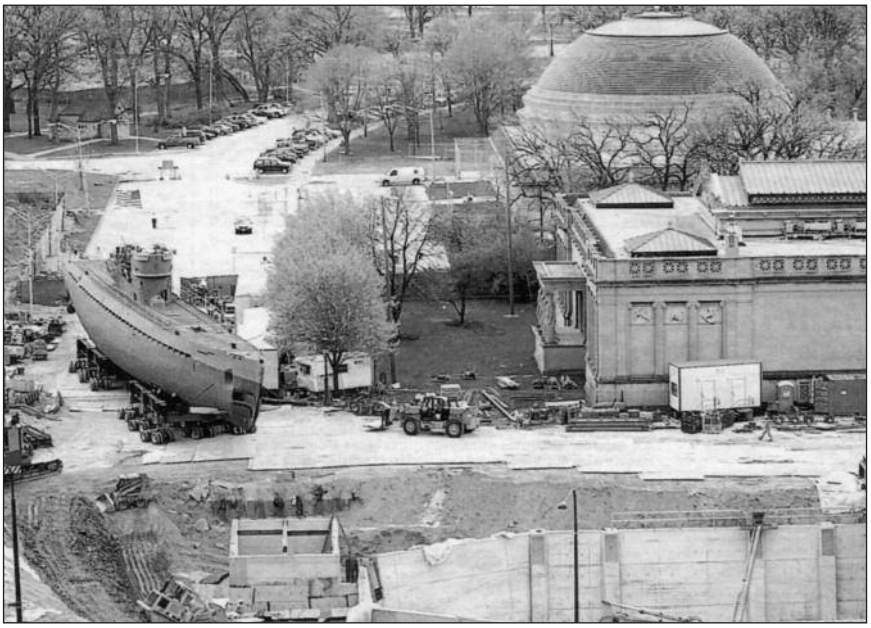
And Richard Hope-Hawkins sent us a picture of another Mussolini relic — a shield which he said that one of his relatives seized as a spoil of war from the Duce's office.

There is nothing more frustrating for an author or editor to discover more relevant material after a story has gone to the press. For example, Jeff Plowman would have liked to have included these new shots of Tigers 210 and 211 when he was trying to match his photos for the Massa Lombarda feature in issue 122. Another case in point concerns the account of the death of General Frank Andrews in issue 123. Too late Roger Bell, our long-standing ETO expert, came up with pictures of the funeral in Reykjavik. We sent them on to Ragnar Ragnarsson, our contact in Iceland, and he provided this comparison.

Jeff Plowman was frustrated at not having these pictures of Tigers 210 *(left)* **and 211** *(right)* **when he researched his Massa Lombada story in issue 122. They were discovered by New Zealand vet Ray McFarland in a pile of old photos under his bed!**

And Roger Bell came up with this picture of General Andrews' funeral enabling Ragnar Ragnarsson to take the comparison. The cortège was passing the Icelandic Parliament, the world's oldest existing parliamentary body, established in 930 AD.

Jean Lachat took this shot of the 700-ton *U-505* slowly making its way to its new underground 'berth' beside the Museum of Science in Chicago. We told the story of its capture in issue No. 3.



The capture of the *U-505* was recounted in issue 3 at which time it was displayed in the open air at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. However, 50 years of exposure to the elements had caused extensive rusting and corrosion so a $35 million project — the largest exhibit restoration project in the museum's history — was set in motion, both to move the submarine to a new purpose-built, underground location and to repair the damage. Jim Mitidiero kept us updated on the mammoth operation to move the sub over 1,000 feet and then lower it into its new climate-controlled environment.

There cannot be many places where one can stay in a former prisoner of war camp but Mr Alexander of Scone by Perth found one during a trip to Germany. 'I had read about Spangenberg Castle near Kassel as it is mentioned in some of my books on WW2 as being used as a POW camp and given the number of Oflag 9A/H. We were told that

Two hotels with a difference. *Left:* **Oflag 9A/H at Spangenberg and** *(right)* **Fred Nash's 1958 'accommodation' in Hannover!**

the castle had been destroyed at the end of the war by bombs and had then been restored and now functions as a hotel. My wife and I walked over the drawbridge into the courtyard and I tried to imagine what it would have been like 60-odd years ago. The wild boars that used to live in the dry moat have now been replaced by goats.

'I strolled round the walkway that runs round the castle's outside wall and looked over across the moat to where the guards would have had their circuit. Freedom was just a short distance away. We were told that the tower was out of bounds as it was only used now as a store. We were however taken down into one of the cellars and shown the well some 100-odd metres deep. We stayed at the castle for two nights and it was a stay I shall always remember.'

Then Fred Nash, who has contributed several items over the years (e.g. issue 81), wrote to us from Cuffley, Hertfordshire. 'There I was, peacefully lying in bed reading the latest issue of ATB about German air raid shelters [issue 124]. Interesting to me as I get involved in surviving Essex shelters as part of the World War Two Defences in Essex project, still going strong (see issue 116). Hannover . . . (dozing away) . . . I was there in 1958 . . . (half asleep) . . . we stayed in a funny hotel . . . a-r-r-g-g-h . . . that hotel!!

'I was in the RAF, stationed at Borgentreich, between Kassel and Paderborn, from 1958 to 1961. For just one weekend half a dozen of us went up to Hannover. Stayed in this weird hotel with no windows and a round turret. I remember the room was tiny and gloomy, like a prison cell with a single electric light. In fact I was so fascinated with the strangeness of the building that I took a picture of it. Now, 46 years later, I hadn't given it another thought. So how did I recognise the Type H III shelter at Am Welfenplatz on page 13 of Michael Foedrowitz's article? Don't ask me, I just did. Up to the loft, album out, and there it was.

'Needless to say, at the time I had no idea it was a wartime air raid shelter. To me it was just a very strange hotel with claustrophobic rooms, and looking back now it doesn't surprise me one bit to hear it was reputed to be a brothel. Although I hasten to add we knew nothing about it at the time!'

In 1983 (issue 39) we told the story of the death of Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory and in 1996 a plaque was unveiled at the crash site (issue 98). To mark the 60th anniversary of the crash, a museum Espace York-Mallory has now been set up in Rivier d'Allemont, the dedication ceremony brought forward to avoid the more wintry weather which contributed to the crash on November 14, 1944. Sir Trafford's brother George also died in an accident on a mountain — while climbing Everest in 1924. Today he is remembered by his immortal response when asked why he wanted to conquer the mountain: 'Because it is there'!!

Mr B. Hodgson of Bradbury sent us a photo of the remains of a Sherman that he had discovered on Skerlinton Sands (see issue 124, page 50). He asked the question as to how it might have got there . . . and John Anderson from Delabole, Cornwall, provided the answer: 'I suggest that these are the remains of an air gunnery target from the Skipsea gunnery and bombing range. This was opened before the war for use by No. 1 Armament Training School based at RAF Catfoss a few miles inland. From 1940 to 1944 the main user of Skipsea was Catfoss-based No. 2 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit equipped with Beaufighters. This unit was followed by the Central Gunnery school in 1944. CGS moved to RAF Leconfield in November 1945 where the unit stayed until 1957. Skipsea closed in 1957 when a new air weapons range was opened on the former tank range at Cowden further south on the Yorkshire coast.'

Mike Smith of the Fire Brigade Society wrote to tell us about a little known fact concerning the story in issue 127 on the Soviet bombing of Helsinki. Through public subscription in Britain, the 'Finland Fund' raised money to purchase a Bedford fire tender and trailer pump which was sent by sea, while eight members of the Auxiliary Fire Service in London flew to Finland via Sweden to man it. They were enrolled in the Helsinki Fire Brigade and dressed in their British uniforms, and with a Union Flag on the bonnet of the Bedford, they soon became a familiar and popular sight in and around the Finnish capital. But once Finland had formally entered the war on the Axis side, they were evacuated to Sweden and interned, ironically by the local fire brigade!

The soldier with the glasses is featured on the Overlord Embroidery in the D-Day Museum at Portsmouth (without spectacles) yet no one has been able to identify him until the family of Emlyn John *(right)* **contacted the *Daily Mail* in June 2004.**

Anniversaries naturally focus the interests of the media and it was pleasing to receive positive identification of the nameless bespectacled soldier wading ashore in the well-known picture taken on Juno beach. The *Daily Mail* published a nice spread in June 2004 identifying him as Emlyn John from Churchdown, Gloucestershire. He recognised himself when the photo was published during the 50th D-Day celebrations, just a few months before he died. Emlyn's son recently contacted the *Mail* as he had been researching his father's life and career. He explained that his dad had been a REME mechanic and, although he normally wore glasses, he used to take them off for formal photos.

Another piece of very welcome news came when Alan Tomkins of King's Langley sent this photograph of the grave of Lance Corporal Fred Greenhalgh in La Délivrande War Cemetery in Normandy . . . now with the correct date of death!

When we put together our two volumes on D-Day, we included a chapter on the very first casualties of Operation 'Overlord' — one aspect which had not been researched in detail before. It had always been accepted that Lieutenant Brotheridge was the first British soldier killed in action as he crossed Pegasus Bridge, but the poor man drowned when the gliders actually landed remained anonymous — because he had been buried with the wrong date of death. We put our evidence that it was Greenhalgh to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, who checked with Ministry of Defence records, and Alan's photo confirmed that an alteration had been made on the headstone, changing the date from June 7 to June 6.

We were also interested to receive information from Gerrit Zijlstra of Scherpenzeel in the Netherlands who was producing a painting of the strafing of Rommel's staff car in July 1944. In issue 8 we speculated that the pilot responsible for putting Rommel out of action was Squadron Leader Le Roux of No. 602 Squadron but it seems that a Canadian pilot, Flight Lieutenant Charles Fox of No. 412 Squadron, RCAF, is another contender: 'We were part of No. 126 Wing, Second Tactical Air Force, based at Beny-Sur-Mur, just inland from Juno beach in Normandy, and in the late afternoon of July 17 we took off on an armed recce. Three sections of four aircraft, led by our CO, Squadron Leader Jack Shepherd, got airborne and then broke up into three separate flights. These were led by the CO, Flight Lieutenant Rob Smith and myself. I spotted a large black car travelling at high speed along a road with trees on either side. It was coming towards us, on my left, at about 11 o'clock. I maintained steady,

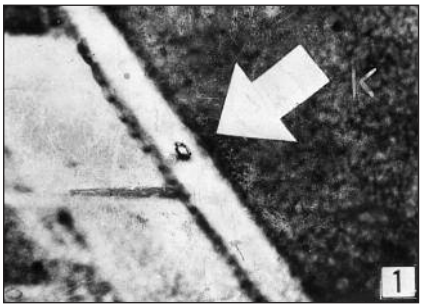
At last Lance Corporal Fred Greehalgh has been given his rightful place in history. He was thrown out of Glider No. 3 as it crash-landed beside Pegasus Bridge, but was buried in Grave 4 of Row C in Plot 5 of La Délivrande Cemetery with the wrong date of death. He is now confirmed as the first British casualty in Normandy on D-Day.

level flight until the vehicle passed us at nine o'clock. I then began a curving, diving attack to my left, with my number two following to watch my tail. The other two aircraft maintained their height keeping an eye out for enemy activity. I started firing at approximately 300 yards, and hit the staff car, causing it to crash. At the time, I had no idea who it was — just a large black open car — gleaming in the sun without any camouflage, which was unusual.'

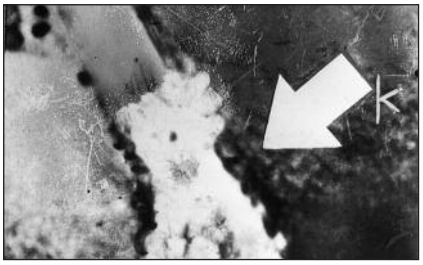
Fox was in the right place at the right time and his logbook entry states that he was flying Spitfire V2-F and that the time in the air was 1.15 mins. Under the 'remarks' column, he has added '1 staff car destroyed' followed by a question mark, then 'Rommel' followed by the word 'yes'.

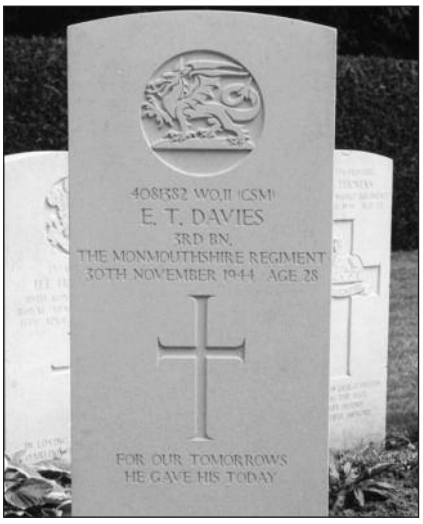
Issue 8 also introduced Alain Roudeix and his unbelievable collection of relics to readers, so we were pleased to receive this recent photo from André Kooijman of Den Haag in the Netherlands. 'It happened that I was on holiday this summer in Normandy and I visited Vimoutiers. At the local town hall I found out that Mr Alain Roudeix was still alive and living nearby. So I simply drove to his house and when I parked my car Alain was just crossing the road to one of his sheds with the relics of war. We shook hands and he showed me his complete collection and of course his appearance in *After the Battle*. For a man of his age he is in very good shape and still has a fighting spirit.'

The indomitable Alain Roudeix whom we first met in Vimoutiers while researching issue No. 8 on the Battle of the Falaise Pocket in 1975. Alain was an eyewitness to the strafing of Rommel and he showed us where the staff car crashed.



At the time, the Press credited the incident to Lieutenant Harold O. Miller, of the Eighth Air Force and released these pictures from his camera gun but we know from Alain that the vehicle did not catch fire.





'For our tomorrows he gave his today'. A fitting inscription for Company Sergeant Major Evan Davies at Venray Military Cemetery.

In issue 107 published in 2000, John Gaunt told the story of the battle which took place at Broekhuizen in south-eastern Holland. In February 2003 a Dutch Army Recovery Team responsible for recovering the remains of Service personnel killed in the two world wars uncovered human remains in an unmarked field grave which had lain undiscovered since the attack on the village on November 30, 1944. CSM Evan Davies was identified by his identity tag yet it took the Ministry of Defence several months to trace his family in Wales. On June 9, 2004 he was buried with full military honours by the 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales.

'First of all I want to tell you that I am a great fan of *After the Battle*' wrote Hans-Dieter Leiber from Bad Hönningen, Germany. 'Thanks to all who make it such an interesting magazine. But the main reason why I am writing to you is that I have identified the exact spot of a photo in issue 16 (crossing the Rhine). On page 1 there is a picture that shows men from the 2nd Division lined up on the western bank. I had that issue for years and every time I saw this picture I had the feeling that I knew this spot. So I went and took the attached comparison photo.

'The picture was taken at the town of Brohl, about 15 kilometres south of Remagen, and it shows the eastern bank of the Rhine. In the middle, behind the trees, is the small hamlet of Hammerstein. The big rock on the right is the Hammersteiner Ley with a ruin on it. The rock on the left is the Rheinbrohler Ley and the house on the extreme left belonged to the German railway company, but it isn't standing any more. I hope I helped to find a little piece in a big puzzle.'

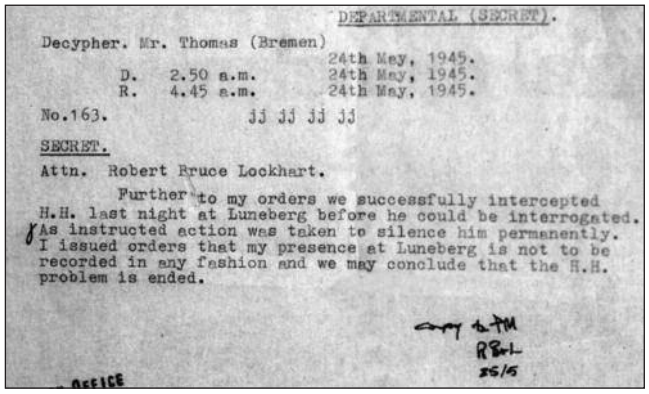
Mea Culpa! We have to own up to an error in issue 88 as we misidentified a Russian in the photo on page 19, taken at the 173rd Regimental HQ. The man second from the right is not Sergeant Nikolai Andreyev but Captain Vasily Nyeda.

We are always interested to receive update comparisons from readers and William Schuber from New Jersey in the US sent us a photo showing the Führer HQ bunker at Margival in France (issue 19). 'There have been some changes and apart from the area being somewhat overgrown and not easy to see, there are now two rail tracks, not one as in your 1977 photo.'

Comparisons of our comparisons! *Left:* **Marty Black of Crystal Lake, Illinois, visited Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii only to find the bullet-holed railings to what is now the Security (Air Police) HQ have been removed to provide wheelchair access (see issue 38, page 35). 'Too bad', wrote Marty, 'as I would've liked to have had them!'** *Right:* **William 'Pat' Schuber of Oradell, New Jersey, visited Margival to picture Wolfsschlucht 2 — the bunker complex which had been built for Hitler for the anticipated invasion of France. In the event, the Führer only visited it once on June 17, 1944.**

That issue on Hitler's headquarters was prepared by Dr Richard Raiber, undoubtedly the world's leading authority on the subject. Any query was always answered in superb detail in immaculately typed letters so it was with much sadness that we learned from his son that he had died in March 2002. For many years, Dr Raiber had worked towards achieving his Doctorate in German History, something he achieved shortly before his death. We look forward to the publication of his dissertation *Anatomy of Perjury: Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, Via Rasella and the Ginny Mission*.

And Blaine Taylor, author of *Mercedes-Benz Parade and Staff Cars of the Third Reich* (Pen & Sword, London), wrote to us from Towson, Maryland: 'Hitler's first trip into the Czech Sudetenland — handed to him without a shot (and with all the Czech frontier fortifications intact) by the British and French at Munich — occurred two days after the German troops entered on October 1, 1938. Thus, on the 3rd, Hitler crossed the former Czech-German frontier at Wildenau *(left)* **in G-4 license plate WH-32288. The gate has been raised and the car passes under just south of Asch at the western tip of Bohemia. Hitler stands in the car as Kempka drives. Outside the vehicle, from left to right, Keitel, Fedor von Bock, Bodenschatz and RSD man Otto Gesche walking alongside the opposite side of the car'.** *Right:* **In the winter of 2000, Blaine stood in the very same car in the exact spot that Hitler did, in the Nevada State Penitentiary, where the collection of cars owned by the late Ralph Louis Engelstad was worked on by the inmates in a special arrangement with the Governor of that State. Upon release, the prisoners were able to get jobs with the Imperial Palace Casino and Museum where some of the other cars were housed in Las Vegas until Engelstad's death in November 2002. After this picture was taken, Blaine was given a tour of a museum adjacent to the owner's Las Vegas suburban home where he personally saw and counted a full 57 other Hitler cars! Following the owner's death — according to still resident director of the Museum Richie Clyne — the entire collection was dispersed by the attorneys of the late owner, with no further information to be made available at their order due to the controversial nature of these vehicles even to this day. They are believed to be in the hands of private collectors around the world at this time. (D. Hoshaw)**



DEPARTMENTAL (SECRET).

Decypher. Mr. Thomas (Bremen)

24th May, 1945.

D. 2.50 a.m. 24th May, 1945.

R. 4.45 a.m. 24th May, 1945.

No.163. jj jj jj jj

SECRET.

Attn. Robert Bruce Lockhart.

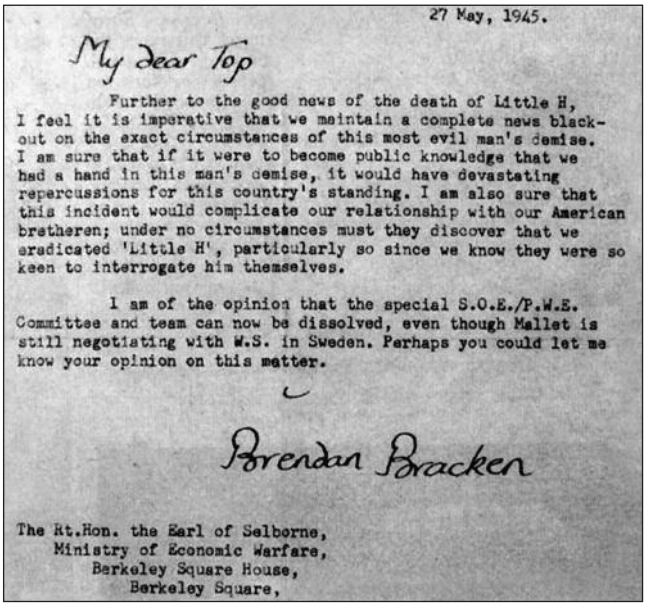
Further to my orders we successfully intercepted H.H. last night at Luneberg before he could be interrogated. As instructed action was taken to silence him permanently. I issued orders that my presence at Luneberg is not to be recorded in any fashion and we may conclude that the H.H. problem is ended.

copy to PM

RBL

25/5

OFFICE



27 May, 1945.

My dear Top

Further to the good news of the death of Little H, I feel it is imperative that we maintain a complete news black-out on the exact circumstances of this most evil man's demise. I am sure that if it were to become public knowledge that we had a hand in this man's demise, it would have devastating repercussions for this country's standing. I am also sure that this incident would complicate our relationship with our American bretheren; under no circumstances must they discover that we eradicated 'Little H', particularly so since we know they were so keen to interrogate him themselves.

I am of the opinion that the special S.O.E./P.W.E. Committee and team can now be dissolved, even though Mallet is still negotiating with W.S. in Sweden. Perhaps you could let me know your opinion on this matter.

Brendan Bracken

The Rt.Hon. the Earl of Selborne,
Ministry of Economic Warfare,
Berkeley Square House,
Berkeley Square,

On July 2, 2005 it was revealed that forged documents had been introduced into Foreign Office files at the Public Record Office with the intention of perverting the historical record. They imply that Himmler was killed by an agent of the Political Warfare Executive but Dr Audrey Giles, a forensic document specialist, declared that the documents were fakes produced on laser-printed letterheads with signatures copied over pencil tracings. And letters from two different government departments were typed on the same contemporary typewriter!

We may have explained before how over the years we have been pressured by TV companies and others to reveal the site where Himmler was buried (see issues 14 and 17) as in the meantime both Ray Weston and Bill Ottery who helped dig the grave have died. During a filmed interview at Church House in 1996, the charming ZDF (the German Channel 2) television interviewer Lutz Becker tried to prise the secret from our Editor-in-Chief. Winston gave suitably ambiguous answers and the interview was never included in the ZDF programme.

More recently, a news reporter from Central Television in the UK tried to persuade Winston to take a film crew back to Lüneburg for the 60th anniversary of Himmler's suicide. Just a month or so after Winston declined, *Himmler's Secret War* by Martin Allen was published by Chrysalis Books in which the author included the sensational allegation that the SS chief was murdered with the knowledge of Churchill and the British War Cabinet! When this was brought to our attention by Lisa Jane Turner of King's Lynn, Winston immediately declared that the claim was absolutely ridiculous, even though purportedly backed up by documents in the Public Record Office. (Winston hates the Americanisation of the change of name to National Archives.)

Martin Allen had discovered the documents in a Political Warfare Executive file (FO 800/808) and appears to have accepted them at face value. However others were not so easily convinced, not only by the improbability of the murder but also by the composition of the letters which was more akin to that of a spy thriller than a grey suit writing from the Foreign Office.

Sure enough on July 2 it was revealed that forensic tests on the documents had proved that they were fakes, presumably inserted into the PRO file by unknown hands. Although there is strict security against the *stealing* of documents, no one ever thought that an attempt might be made to pervert history by *introducing* forged documents with the intent of misleading historians. What with the ability of anyone to now alter photographs using Photoshop, it seems that even contemporary history is now at risk of being manipulated. At the time of writing, the perpetrators have not been found.

The suicide of the other top Nazi, Hermann Göring, also took a new twist when an American, Herbert Stivers, told the *Los Angeles Times* that *he* had given him the cyanide. Before he died, Ben Swearingen carried out exhaustive research into this as he possessed the empty phial in his collection. We included Ben's findings in issue 44 and, for our part, our money is still on Jack Wheelis being the real culprit.

We were pleased to hear that Martin and Fran Collins of Sutton Coldfield had achieved their goal of having the 1st Base Post Office building (see issue 81) listed as Grade 2 which means that although the buildings can be sold, at least they cannot be demolished or not easily! It is very unusual for individuals to apply for listed status for a building that they do not own, but Martin and Fran have proved that it is possible. They are only too pleased to give advice to anybody else seeking to preserve other wartime buildings. Their E-mail address is *martinandfran@madasafish.com*.

'I wanted to thank you for your generosity in digging out and forwarding to me via Ann Jones a copy of the *After the Battle* edition covering the Vaagso raid (issue 109)', wrote American Lieutenant Colonel Joseph H. Devins Jr. who in 1967 authored *The Vaagso Raid*, still the best single volume on the operation. 'It was duly delivered to me in Bergen, the day Ann arrived to join with me and a selected few others in attending a reunion of surviving members of the 1941 raiding force.

'It was unfortunate that out of approximately 500 commandos who landed at Maloy (the actual name of the town that was the centre of the action), the Commando Association was able to locate only 18 still alive, and that of these only seven were able to make the trip. Plus of course Ann (the daughter of Lance Sergeant Harold Povey killed in the action) and the son and grandson of another commando, Gunner Ken Enoch, who survived the action badly wounded but recently died; and Henry Brown, the president of the Commando Association.

'I am happy to report that these people, along with some family members of the surviving seven raiders who accompanied them on the trip, were all treated like visiting royalty by the local population. The commandos' visit was part of a local festival called *Maloydagene* (Maloy Days) which featured a street fair, performances by the marching band of your own Royal Marines (who met us at pierside playing *March of the Cameron Men*, the air which Major Jack Churchill had sounded on his bagpipes during the original assault landing), the band of the Norwegian King's Royal Guards and their amazing colour guard/drill team, a wonderful crew of some 50 uniformed British motorcyclists ages 5-15, and local marching groups and entertainers from all over Norway. Parades, an evening military tattoo on the mountain above the town, local ceremonies and wreath-layings — always with the commando group introduced publicly as special honoured guests and local heroes. Much local news coverage of the commandos visit was noted as well.

'Being able to attend and observe these events was a special delight to me, and very much an honour, and my first visit to the actual scene of the combat was aided by study of your Vaagso piece on the night before leaving Bergen for Maloy. Thank you again for making it available to me.'

Ann Jones of Widnes, Cheshire, sent us this photograph she took at the commemorations in Vaagso in July 2005. Anne has worked tirelessly for several years to try to find out exactly what happened to her father's body after he was killed on the raid. Officially he is listed on the Brookwood Memorial in Surrey as missing in action.